

The Power in the Writer

(Collected Essays on Culture, Democracy and Development in Africa).

Mwalimu George Ngwane

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Francis B Nyamnjoh

Stories from Abakwa

Mind Searching

The Disillusioned African

The Convert

Souls Forgotten

Dibussi Tande

No Turning Back. Poems of Freedom 1990-1993

Kangsen Feka Wakai

Fragmented Melodies

Ntemfac Ofege

Namondo. Child of the Water Spirits

Emmanuel Fru Doh

Not Yet Damascus

The Fire Within

Thomas Jing

Tale of an African Woman

Peter Wuteh Vakunta

Grassfields Stories from Cameroon

Ba'bila Mutia

Coils of Mortal Flesh

Kehbuma Langmia

Titabet and The Takumbeng

Ngessimo Mathe Mutaka

Building Capacity: Using TEFL and African languages as development-oriented literacy tools

Milton Krieger

Cameroon's Social Democratic Front: Its History and Prospects as an Opposition Political party, 1990-2011

Sammy Oke Akombi

The Raped Amulet

The Woman Who Ate Python

Susan Nkwentie Nde

Precipice

Francis B Nyamnjoh & Richard Fonteh Akum

The Cameroon GCE Crisis: A Test of Anglophone Solidarity

Joyce Ashuntantang & Dibussi Tande

Their Champagne Party Will End! Poems in Honor of Bate Besong

The Power In The Writer

Collected Essays On Culture, Democracy & Development in Africa

Mwalimu George Ngwane



Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Mankon, Bamenda

Publisher:

Langaa RPCIG

(*Langaa* Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group)

P.O. Box 902 Mankon

Bamenda

North West Province

Cameroon

Langaagrp@gmail.com

www.langaapublisher.com

ISBN:9956-558-37-0

© George Ngwane 2008

First Published 2008

DISCLAIMER

All views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Langaa RPCIG.

Content

Preface	<i>vi</i>
Introducing Mwalimu George Ngwane	<i>viii</i>
Part One: Cultue	1
Chapter One: The Power in the writer & the Writer in power	2
Chapter Two: The Cameroon Book Industry – challenges and changes	11
Chapter Three: Creative industries, Cultural entrepreneurship and Political statehood	18
Chapter Four: From Environmental waste to Artistic wealth	23
Chapter Five: Towards an Arts and Culture market in Africa (<i>In memory of Nzante Spee (Cameroonian Artist) and Yvonne Vera (Zimbabwean writer)</i>)	27
Chapter Six: Cameroonian Cultural Industries: Potentials and Promises	32
Chapter Seven: Mongo Beti, The Gadfly	37
Chapter Eight: Spectrum Television (STV): The Dream and the Drift	40
Part Two: Pan African Democracy	46
Chapter Nine: Alternative Democratic models in Africa	47
Chapter Ten: The Military and African politics	56
Chapter Eleven: Deconstructing liberal Democracy in Africa	61
Chapter Twelve: Benin: From Liberal to Social Democracy	66
Chapter Thirteen: A Memorandum to the President of the Republic of Cameroon	71
Chapter Fourteen: The Opposition and their performance of electoral power in Cameroon (1992 – 2007)	81
Chapter Fifteen: What Powers for the Chairman of the African Union Commission?	96
Chapter Sixteen: Democracy never dies	101
Chapter Seventeen: The September Sirte Summit-cradle of African Union	104
Chapter Eighteen: Cameroon's new twist in pan African solidarity	108
Chapter Nineteen: Because we were involved (Reflections on the All Anglophone Conference ten years after)	112
Chapter Twenty: Cameroon's Democratic Process: Vision 2020	117
Chapter Twenty One: Threshing the Togolese Tangle	135
Part Three: Afrocentric Development	137
Chapter Twenty Two: Africa's Development Problematique (The case of NEPAD)	138

Chapter Twenty Three: Africa and the Neocolonial Development Mirage	143
Chapter Twenty Four: Going Global	148
Chapter Twenty Five: The African Woman	152
Chapter Twenty Six: Gender-based violence in Africa	154
Part Four: Interviews	159
Chapter Twenty Seven: Cultural Unification Identified as Instrument of African Unity - <i>Interviewed by Walter Wilson Nana (The Post Newspaper)</i>	160
Chapter Twenty Eight: George Ngwane: The Independent Intellectual - (Original published in <i>Post Newsmagazine</i>)	163
Chapter Twenty Nine: There is a loss of faith in the Party System in Cameroon - <i>Interviewed by Nforngwa Ndiboti Eugene (The Herald)</i>	168
Chapter Thirty: The United States of Africa is a Matter of Urgency - <i>Originally published in Panafrican Visions magazine</i>	172
Chapter Thirty One: The Causes of Conflicts in Africa	179

Preface

The House on the anthill
(for Mwalimu George Ngwane)

The Party makes aluminium crowns
And puts them on the
Heads of
Toad-eaters, in tyrannised, robotic space

Their minds now work like a
Cart wheel, going
Round and round
In circles.
Our body decays while we are alive.

When armed robbers in the guise of
Provincial Governors cover their eyes with dark glasses
And shout big, meretricious
Slogans;

WE ARE A DEMOCRATIC
AND UNITED COUNTRY

Don't worry
Gluttony has been the death of those
Who make good appear evil,
Who find fault with the
Noblest actions

And plough
The ground to sow seeds of
Injustice

Don't be jealous of a
Festering, carrion's success, you
Do not know what disaster awaits him

Idols are

Dressed in purple robes

Like Emperor Bedel Bokassa, but
They
Cannot keep themselves
From

Being tarnished
Or protect themselves
From
Termites.
See how useless they are!
They can't walk on their own feet, but
must be carried around.

Even if you suffer humiliation, Be
Patient
Great things often have small
And humble beginnings; but they

Survive, grow steadily, and
Flower

By Bate Besong

Source: www.batebesong.com (11th August 2006)

Introducing Mwalimu George Ngwane

I have known George Ngwane in both a professional and personal capacity for close to 15 years, during which we have been comrades in arms in the search for possible solutions to Cameroon's socio-political challenges. In the 1990s, we both were regular contributors to leading English language newspapers and magazines in Cameroon such as *Cameroon Life Magazine*, *Le Messenger*, and the *Cameroon Post*. We were also at the frontline of the struggle to protect the rights of Cameroon's Anglophone minority through events and organizations such as the *All Anglophone Conference* (AAC) of April 1993.

For over a decade now, George Ngwane has stood out as one of Cameroon's foremost political analyst and social activist.

An unapologetic and uncompromising drum major for peace and democracy in Cameroon, Ngwane, unlike many of his contemporaries, has sacrificed his personal comfort and professional ambitions to take up causes - respect for human rights, implementation of true democratic reform, protection of minority rights, etc., - that have earned him the opprobrium of the Government of Cameroon. One of the brightest and most enterprising of his generation, Ngwane could easily have become a key member of Cameroon's ruling party if only he had been willing to discard his deeply-held convictions on the altar of personal ambition. This has not been the case. And, after a decade-long attempt to co-opt him into the ruling party, the Cameroon regime has finally concluded that he is an enemy of the State who cannot be redeemed.

Ngwane, a rare intellectual

Even more than his political activism, what has separated Ngwane from most Cameroonian intellectuals is his willingness and ability to go beyond his "natural comfort zone" to expertly write and speak about a large range of public issues, not necessarily directly connected to his original field of expertise.

The holder of a graduate degree in English Literature from the University of Yaounde, Ngwane is best known not for his literary prowess, which is impressive in its own right, but for his immense contributions to the understanding of the complexities of

African political systems and their impact on the democratization process; and for his ground-breaking work on conflict resolution in Africa. Coming from a country and continent where intellectuals are not taken seriously when they "stray" from their field of study and expertise, Ngwane has become a symbol of something much larger. For example, his book on indigenous methods of conflict resolution in Africa, along with his other publications on the same topic, have been used as required text in many universities around the world. Ngwane himself has served as Guest lecturer in the Political Science and History Departments of the University of Buea - an impressive feat for one with a literature background.

Ngwane a committed activist

Nowhere has Ngwane's commitment to social causes been more manifest than in the civil society organizations that he has either founded or been involved with particularly AFRICAphonic (A pan African organization that promotes African Unity, democratization and demilitarization of Africa, and indigenous solutions to Africa's problems) which he founded in the mid 1990s. With little or no external resources Ngwane has succeeded in transforming AFRICAphonic into a premier Pan African organization in Cameroon and has won praise and admiration from actors on both sides of that country's generally unbridgeable political and linguistic divide.

A tireless scholar

Beyond all his activism, however, George Ngwane is an indefatigable scholar with an avaricious thirst for knowledge; one who is quite at ease with the rigors of high level intellectual analyses and research. Given his wide breath of knowledge on a plethora of issues, his organizational skills and intellectual discipline, Ngwane is a scholar who will be at home in any leading academic or research institution in the world. Not only does he bring a totally different and challenging perspective on African and World issues, he also has a lot to contribute to the development of a new corpus of knowledge for Africa in line with the continent's 21st century aspirations.

An endangered species

Anyone who is remotely familiar with the workings of African political systems will quickly realize that people like Ngwane who stand outside of political institutions and actively challenge the status quo are an endangered species, which is either hunted down or hunted out by those in power. Thus, after failing to woo Ngwane into its camp with incremental enticements (the latest being his appointment to the influential position as Delegate of Culture in the Southwest Province in 2004), the Government has finally realized that Ngwane is not for sale. Less than six months after that appointment, Ngwane was fired because of a paper he wrote for the African Research group, CODESRIA, which was deemed subversive. Anyone remotely familiar with the workings of African regimes knows that this is just the first round in what will be a long war of attrition

Without doubt, George Ngwane's best is yet to come in spite of the Herculean obstacles on his way, and this collection is just a small window into what he has to offer. Sit back and drink deep from the *Mwalimu's* fountain of knowledge that never runs dry!!

Dibussi Tande, poet and essayist, USA (2008)

Chapter One

The Power in the Writer and the Writer in power

The ultimate mission of every writer is to liberate both the minds of the oppressed and the oppressors in order to cultivate a harmonious society. How this mission is attained may be a subject of controversy, but make no mistake about it, the message for every credible writer is the same; it is the style that may make the difference.

Ben Okri, the young London based Nigerian writer and winner of the 1991 Booker Prize once said “If you want to know what is happening to a nation, find out what is happening to the writer.”¹ He ventures into combining the artistic creativity and the prophetic prowess of divinity when he further says, “the inklings of writers are the forgotten adventures of God.”² In other words whenever power mongers become lost in the journey of personality cult, when the politician’s ship is drowning in the ocean of dictatorship, it is the writer who serves as the compass pointing the ship of state to the shores of sanity. The social role of the writer has not only been a desire to lodge a claim for artistic leadership but to lay emphasis on democratic entitlement, that is, “bringing the greatest good to the greatest number”. Wole Soyinka makes the point when he writes, “when the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon”³. The writer had always functioned in African society as the record of mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his time. This urge and conviction to liberate their societies have sometimes motivated writers to embark on a quest for political leadership either through constitutional means like the poets Augustino Neto of Angola and Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, and the essayists Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria. Or through unconstitutional means like the poet Christopher Okigbo who was killed fighting for Biafra during the Nigerian civil war or the poet-playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa who was hanged for defending the rights of the Ogoni people in Nigeria. With the introduction of

multiparty politics, writers have sought to have their visions engraved in party manifestoes like Chinua Achebe who became Vice President of the *Peoples' Redemption Party* in the 1980s, Mongo Beti who militated for the *Social Democratic Front*, Ferdinand Oyono and Mbella Sonne Dipoko who are apologists of the *Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais*. So there has always been a smooth relationship between writers and politics maybe because both require the weapon of words as a medium of liberation, even if one uses the weapon of words for self-defence and the other for the defence of society. There is an assumption that the writer and the power elite are concerned with the welfare of humanity but in the exercise of their duties, this assumption gradually degenerates to an erroneous philosophy -- therein lies the perception of a writer as a nuisance. A writer provides in his writings a certain articulate vision, which must order his society, otherwise, social life will be a very sterile and very futile exercise. Jean Paul Satre says, "Literature must be made to serve a political purpose, since literature, Truth, democracy and other human values are bound up in kind of program"⁴. Any writer who therefore believes in the assertion of human values will not fail to speak when humanity is betrayed and mutilated. In Africa, most especially, the denial of some basic social amenities and the exclusion of more than 80 per cent of the population from decision-making have become the trademark of leadership. This situation has become so entrenched that all but the writer regard it as the norm. So, why do politicians consider writers as nuisances? Simple -- writers have the courage to tell the king he is naked when the emasculated power elite fool him (king) that his invisible dress is beautiful. In other words, the writer is the voice of truth but how does he voice this truth? To answer this question, let me attempt a not-too-rigid classification of three kinds of writers and speculate how their writing styles can influence political reaction. The classes are the Writer-Activist, Writer-Statesman, and Writer-Politician.

Writer-activist

He keeps reminding the politician of his promises to the people; he, like the housefly settles on the wounds of society; he generally ignores the strength of the politician and dwells essentially on his weaknesses. More often than not, writers in this class are never

involved in government or party politics fearing to be infected by the virus of unbridled power. Instead these writers would be found in the rank of pressure groups and people-centred organizations. In politics they have neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies only permanent interest – the interest of the people. It is therefore not strange to find them having problems with every government in power. It is this class that politicians are wont to regard as nuisance but I think one quality of this class and arguably the quality that leads them to trouble is their writing style. Most of them use a protest style, the language is one of bitterness and anger, the diction is one of invectives; the approach, conformational; the spirit, crusading and the mood indicting. The writer matches his outrage with the level of the politician's betrayal. Because of this, the politician shifts his focus from the pertinent message of the writer to the confrontational style of the writer. The politician judges the writer's work to be a call for incitement, revolt and rebellion. Then there is a clash of egos; a conflict of authority, - the writer maintaining his authority of principles and vision; the politician imposing his authority of legitimacy and legality. Some writers in this class include Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, Ngugi wa Thiongo of Kenya and Bate Besong of Cameroon. Bate Besong has never failed to portray the frustration of the masses against what he considers an oppressive system whether in the 1st or in the 2nd Republics. Be it in his earlier works like *Beast of no nation* or in his recent play called *Change Waka and his man Sawaboy*, his head-on style with corrupt Kaisers has not changed. Hear him in an old poem:

Indeed, they have sworn fealty to their masonic lodges
& to each other to bankrupt our national coffers
The curse on the heads of the corrupt banditti.
There is evidence that evil still survives absolutely
And the only good is a cripple, chained to the dungeon of
Mockery and dust.
But their champagne party will end...'⁵

Hear him in his new play "Look left or right to see if the camion is coming before you cross the red sea of election fool. You are suffering too, aren't you? Those who put their trust in sous –

prefets and sons of kangaroos have stories of woe to tell.”⁶ Hear him again but this time in non-fiction:

“We are in the season of harrowing self-analysis. We are the products of an age of profound discontent. We are an embattled people under the cancerous embrace of national integration fighting against titanic odds. And yet there was a time when people had faith, implicit faith in this union – without making any investigation. But I ask you where is the faith now? It has vanished. So utterly! The bonds have snapped. We carry the scars of brotherhood in a country so unaccustomed to candour.”⁷

Not doubt Bate Besong has had several unpleasant encounters with the Police. First when he wrote a fierce review of my book *The Mungo Bridge* in 1990, he was subjected to 12 hours of interrogation. Then the following year he staged his play *Beasts of no nation* in the University of Yaounde. Hours after the play, a report was sent to Security Agents accusing the playwright of trying to stir a revolt among students. As if that was not enough he was invited to CRTV Yaounde for an interview only to be picked up by the Police. In all his writings Bate has consistently and frontally challenged the Cameroonian Project of nation building.

Another example in this class is Ngugi wa thiongo. Ngugi’s publisher Mr. Henry Chakava once said: “it is not for me to tell you Ngugi’s style has kept him suffering. In spite of the problems, my association with Ngugi has been dreadfully rewarding both intellectually and commercially. Further there is not a single Ngugi book I have published that has not been an instant bestseller.”⁸ Yes, if there is any African writer who has been so disillusioned by the fruits of Independence it is Ngugi; he feels betrayed by the bourgeoisie class that has come to assimilate the trappings of the colonialist. – Hence his concept of the barrel of the pen.

My last example is Wole Soyinka. His life as a writer has been one of detentions, assassination attempts and exile. He has become the paragon of frontal collision of Nigerian leadership. In his play *The Swamp Dwellers* Wole Soyinka brings the visionary Igwezu into confrontation with the corrupt leader Kadive with the following question, “why are you so fat, Kadiye? You lie upon the

land and choke it in folds of a serpent.”⁹ His most recent books *The beautiful area boy* and *Nigeria, the open sore of the continent* are arguably the most confrontational works on bad governance incarnated by the late Sani Abacha. Hear Soyinka:

“I know that Abacha has a bunch of killers in Nigeria. Let me tell you: torture of the most vile unimaginable kind, has become institutionalised in Nigeria. The world must forgive Nigerians if her despots instead of acknowledging the eruption of flames around them, fiddle like the decadent emperors of ancient Rome, organizing circuses of ostentations emptiness, dispense a people’s largesse to the simpering elite of the continent and burn resources that are critically needed by a decaying empire.”¹⁰

Because these writers have a strong message couched in “hostile” style, politicians easily misunderstand them. Yet we all know the positive changes a writer like Soyinka has brought to his country. Apparently writer activists derive their greater authority from the confrontation of their political antagonists.

Writer-statesman

The main principle of this class is to pass a message to the politicians in a direct yet subtle manner. The writer’s style is pedagogic, full of innuendo and euphemism. The writer uses what a South African author calls artful words – words that appeal to reason. The writer assumes the role of a teacher or preacher. Read Chinua Achebe’s *The Trouble with Nigeria* and compare it with Soyinka’s earlier work cited above. It is one of the most authoritative political non-fictional works in recent times. Because of their appealing approach, members of this class have at one time or the other been invited to join political power. Here the writer gets in power with the purpose of fulfilling the aspirations of the people and not necessarily that of the leader. Within political power, the writer remains a guide but sometimes opts out when his ideas are not welcome. An example is the Cameroonian essayist Bernard Fonlon. Fonlon was lured into power by Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha where he served as Vice Minister of transport. Even as a member of the *Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP)*, Fonlon never spared any effort to pick on the bad policies of his party as

seen in his essay called *The task today*. As Minister he wrote essays on the corrupt nature of his colleagues and even refused a Mercedes Benz car preferring to ride in a less expensive Volks wagen. His argument was “why use 4 million francs on a Mercedez Benz when it can be used for something more productive?”¹¹

As Presidential aide from 1961 – 1964, he wrote one of the best essays on the loopholes of the Federal system, which he called “Upon a Rock or Upon Sand?” – an essay whose content would have probably solved the Anglophone/Francophone divide. He warned,

“ there must be permanent dialogue between the two parties else the stronger party will usurp the enterprise and reduce the weaker partner to a passive onlooker and when this happens, there can be no other outcome but discontent and frustration.”¹²

Fonlon’s pedagogic style made him a partner not a collaborator of the politician. He remained independent in his vision to the point where when there was a cabinet impasse the then President of Cameroon Amadou Ahidjo would turn to him and ask; “Monsieur le Philosophe, quel est votre avis?”

Each time a writer is invited to power or given a post of responsibility, it is to draw from his deepermost fountain of ideas; he is called as a guide to translate his giant vision into consensual reality. A post of responsibility is not a favour or privilege conferred on a writer. Thus, while honoring this call, the writer must also fulfill the tenets of his vision. Whether it is the poet Kofi Awoonor who served as Ghanian Ambassador or the meticulous poet–novelist Mbella Sonne Dipoko who served as Mayor for Tiko, (and the inhabitants still remember a modest, soft-spoken politician who went to work on a bicycle) the writer should not die in the statesman. In all, this class cohabits easily with politicians not out of compromise; not because their message is different from the first, but because of style -- yet it is not unusual to find members of this class join the ranks of the first.

Writer – politician

This is a class of neither nuisances nor guides; they are mere opportunists. Their message may be illuminating; their style may

be confrontational or pedagogic, but at the end of the day they are not on the side of the people. For indeed, to go back to the crux of this essay, my position is that the writer must have a social function whether he is loved, ignored or antagonized by political authorities. He must remain the conscience of the people; the agent of change, whatever the odds. But this writer-politician class is one of collaborators, lackeys and stooges who by joining any political system blur even the little vision left of the politician.

Example No. 1: Leopold Sedar Senghor (first President of Senegal). For all his artistic finesse and aesthetic superiority about negritude and black consciousness the poet-president was the epitome of French culture and civilisation. I choose to talk about his Pan African side because that was the one ideal he so much espoused in his writing and yet one that was so greatly betrayed. The betrayal was so severe that he found himself antagonising a real advocate of the black race, Cheick Anta Diop. Did Senghor use his black consciousness poems just to position himself in the decolonisation process that was rocking Africa in the late 50s?

Example No. 2: Writers who have held or are holding lesser Presidential positions in African governments, and who see in these positions a juicy reward for years of artistic solitude. Our continent is replete with writers who have transformed themselves into syndicated chroniclers of predatory “motions of support” at a time when the African continent needs patriotic “actions of service”. Their role as torch-bearing is then eclipsed by a moribund sycophancy. Their sweet sources of inspiration quickly dissipate into shrinking spaces of prebendalism. But time and history are never on their side. Time quickly catches on half – truths and history is fast at exposing half baked political clichés. Any writer who considers maintaining his authority and vision should make a wise choice between the first two classes, for better or for worse. For, there is a writer in every politician and a politician in every writer; but on whose side is the writer/politician?

Conclusion

There is no controversy about a writer’s mission which is very clear: to help the political leadership safely pilot all of us to the tarmac of development, equitable economic sharing, political stability and greater African Unity. This mission was clearly echoed by the

erstwhile Chairman of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konare, during a Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora held in Dakar – Senegal from 7th to 9th October 2004. Konare appealed to African leaders “to join forces with their academic communities to determine a new direction for the continent and find lasting solutions to its problems”. He urged African leaders to “open their doors to African intellectuals and give them the attention they deserve so they could help in the transformation of our countries into lands of freedom and transparency.”¹³ I have heard of something called Consultancy – a job I am told is quite lucrative but which writers have been doing, albeit, for free. We have been misunderstood, tortured, humiliated, imprisoned, exiled and hanged yet the problems for which we stake our lives continue to harass the citizenry by day and haunt the leadership by night. I see writers as shadow cabinet politicians, not suspicious partners, scheming rivals or sworn enemies. Any political leadership that is people-centered, development-oriented and enjoys popular support can never consider any class of writers as nuisances. It is those, according to Ben Okri, who are secretly sickened by what they have become, those who are scared of reality, of their own truths, of their own histories, those who are alarmed by the strange mask-like faces that peer back at them from the mirrors of time; it is they who resist the writer.

Indeed at the height of a scandal that rocked his government to its very foundations, Mr. Harold Macmillan, former Prime Minister of Great Britain, was asked at a Press Conference, which he thought was the wisest government. His answer came quickly and clear: “it is that government which knows how to use both thinkers and doers.” Macmillan, with over forty years of Parliamentary experience, certainly knew what he was talking about.

Notes

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The Past* newspaper as a serial from October 10-21 2005

1. Ben Okri (1992) “Of Poets and their antagonists”, in B. Malcolm & J. Cooke, London, p.152
2. Ben Okri (1992). p.152

3. Wole Soyinka (1968) "The writer in a modern African state" in P. Westberg (ed), *The writer in modern Africa*, UPPSALA, p.21
4. J.P Satre (1950) "What is literature?" Methuen, London
5. Bate Besong (1986) "Their champagne party will end" in B. Besong, *The grain of Bobe Ngom Jua*, Drapoe, Yaounde, P. 12
6. Bate Besong (2001) *Change Waka and his man Sawa boy*, Editions Cle Yaounde, P, 12
7. Bate Besong (1993) "Literature in the season of the Diaspora: notes to the Anglophone Cameroonian writer" in B. Eckhard, Lyonga N, Butake B, (eds), *Anglophone Cameroon writing*, Bayreuth, p.16
8. Henry Chakava (1999) "Publishing Ngugi: the challenge, the risk and the reward" in J.Gibbs and J Mapanje (eds). *The African writers hand book*, Oxford, p.117
9. Wole Soyinka (1973) "the Swamp Dwellers" in Wole Soyinka's Collected plays 1, Oxford, p. 109
10. Wole Soyinka (1997) "Africa's leadership crisis: the sagging for axis", SAPEM magazine June 15 – July 15, p. 21
11. Bernard Fonlon (1989) "Interview by Richard Bjorson", in N Lyonga (ed), *Socrates in Cameroon*, Tortoise Books, Yaounde and Leeds, p, 122
12. Bernard Fonlon (1989) "Upon a rock or upon sand" in N. Lyonga (ed), *Socrates in Cameroon*, Tortoise books, Yaounde and leeds, p.135
13. Alpha O. Konare (2004) leaders must work with academia, *New Africa Magazine*, December p.33

Chapter Two

The Cameroon Book Industry – challenges and changes

“If Education is the road out of poverty, then books are the wheels needed for the journey.” Richard Crabbe, (Ghanaian Publisher)

Introduction

Books represent the mirror of every society; they showcase the immortal lore and mores of a people, they act as a publicity stunt for a nation since they go beyond the atavistic modes of cultural folklore. C.K. Paul once said “books constitute the tree of knowledge which has grown into, and twined its branches with those of the tree of life, and of their common fruit men eat and become as gods knowing good and evil”.

The book sector in Cameroon poses some great concerns that necessitate a clinical diagnosis of its state and future. This diagnosis is of particular import because a man-made book famine is systemically gaining currency in Cameroon’s cultural landscape.

For the purpose of this essay, I shall limit my diagnosis to three main areas viz; professional initiative, public partnership and government responsibility. It is hoped that this will stimulate discussion necessary to provide a therapy to the dearth of a book culture in Cameroon.

Professional initiative

The pot of a book sector rests on the five firestones of reading, writing, publishing, marketing and purchasing. The function of authorship is to conceptualise the idea in written form, publishing reshapes it into a more readable form, targeted at a particular readership. Next the printer manufactures bound books for distribution and marketing. In concrete terms, a book sector comprises readers, writers, book sellers, publishers, printers, literary agents, Librarians, illustrators, archivists etc. Each book sector needs to be active in order to make the book chain completely functional. This does not seem to be the case in Cameroon, where book professionals have traditionally resigned to complacency and pessimism rather than take professional initiatives. Books are

primarily the reserve of the civil society and non-state actors have more stakes in building a sustainable book culture than government and the International community. The first professional initiative needed in the book industry is the setting up of Associations. I am still to discover the existence of a viable readers' Club, writers' association, publishers' Association, librarians' club, book council etc in Cameroon. Those that exist have been timid in carrying out literary activities needed to keep afloat the book industry. A few associations like Buea writers club, Douala writers club, National Book Development Council, African Book Development, South West Association of librarians, South West Booksellers Association, Cameroon Publishers Association, CREPLA and the Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association have made some strides in addressing the various issues inherent in the book sector but have hardly made a national impact. Our civil service mentality (what profit is there?) and the weak base of our civil society (allergy to collective interest) have contributed to the professional inertia found in our book industry. The result is that few books are published (in the conventional publishing sense), few book workshops are organised, literary awards are absent, our libraries have emptied their customers into off licenses (pubs) and *Tiercé* (gambling), students graduate without buying a single book, no University has a Press, a national book week or book fair is anathema, and the world book day is a non-event. Without professional interest and solidarity, without a passion for books, without a coordinated and harmonised approach to overhauling the rustic wheel of the book machinery, first by the book professionals themselves, the book industry in Cameroon is in danger of succumbing to the pangs of liquidation. Without prejudice to, and exclusion of other segments of the book chain, the most important segment that needs reenergizing in Cameroon today is the jerky Cameroon Publishers Association created in 1997. Philip G Altbach observes that public sector publishing has failed and the way out is private sector publishing. With a vibrant autonomous indigenous publishing industry, the other segments will fall in place. This of course presupposes that the publishers must individually conform to what the veteran Kenyan publisher, Henry Chakava, calls "the model publisher."

Public partnership

The book industry like every sphere of our national life needs both national patronage and international partnership (institutional support). To quote the Malawian writer, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza,

“Books constitute crucial repositories of social memories and imaginations, containing the accumulated cultural capital of society, of its accomplishments, agonies and aspirations. Books therefore are not and cannot be a luxury, a dispensable dessert on the menu of development, nationhood, or human progress.”

Yet the Cameroon book industry is still to find patronage with the business elite or company cultural ideologies. The Cameroon business elite have made books the least pocket-friendly commodity, opting instead for wares of sensational sponsorship. It is no secret that Cameroon’s music industry stands tall basically because there are individuals producing musicians; the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) has made a free rise success due to the intervention of a nationalistic business class stamping their trade mark on the country’s cultural identity.

Now, compare the pitiful unpatronising book neglect in Cameroon to the spontaneous and sensational sponsorship syndrome that various companies have adopted when it comes to the national team (Indomitable Lions) and other related mega-mediatised socio-cultural outfits. Write a project proposal in the book domain and submit it to any of the big companies and the reply (if you do have any) begins with the screaming introduction ‘we are sorry...’ Probably because sponsoring book efforts does not provide an opportunity for the sponsor to enjoy media celebrity, potential sponsors, including local embassies and the international community, have forgotten that the book industry is an ideas industry and that the progress of every nation depends on its immense intellectual/human foundation. It is indeed revolting to know that international donor response to book projects in Cameroon has more often than not been met with a slight snub. Yet it is this positive international donor response that has in the main accounted for the relative book boom in West, Central and Southern Africa. As one who has been invited to book functions outside the country, I can ascertain that even though there has been a substantial increase in book production in Cameroon (due to self-

publishing and vanity publishing), it is not matched by quality production. I was a victim of shame in 1999 during the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) where my stand of Cameroon collective exhibit paled into insignificance between the two stands of a Nigerian and an Indian book exhibitor. These two exhibitors told me that part of their quality success came about from International and local business support. Those keen enough to watch our public and private media would notice a plethora of commercial adverts hitting our TV screens, seducing consumers to gamble their lives into winning brand new gadgets, one of which costs about fifty millions FCFA (an amount that can produce 25 different titles of 1000 copies at FCFA 2000 U.P). These enterprises can enter into a book series publication with our local publishers. For example (Company A) book series on Gender writing, (Company B) Children's literature series, (Company C) publication on new Cameroonian writers etc. Of course, this would also mean that such enterprises benefit from tax deductible policies from the government.

Government responsibility

Government concern for the book industry anywhere is crucial to the book development of any country. There are good reasons for the Cameroonian government to support football through the Cameroon football federation (FECAFOOT). Government should support our music through the Cameroon Music Corporation and it should continue stretching its hand in funding political parties during elections. But for knowledge sake, the book industry in Cameroon also hungers for government's attention. While opening the Nairobi International Book Fair in 2003, the then Kenyan Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Professor George Saitoti had this to say: "Let us strive to make publication and dissemination of information part of our culture so that we may use the medium to address our own agenda as developing nations." No one can deny that the Cameroonian book industry has produced some of Africa's best and brightest with international clout. Some of them include Bate Besong who won the ANA award in 1992, Calixthe Beyala who won the "Grand Prix du Roman de l'Academie Francaise" in 1996, Ferdinand Oyono and Mongo Beti whose two books were celebrated among Africa's best 100 books of the 20th

century during the Zimbabwe Book Fair in 2002. These icons of ideas are still to hear their names in the accolades of executive national discourse. They are still to be convinced that the gateway to national stardom or martyrdom is not only through the Indomitable Lions or athletics. After all, it was Alpha Oumar Konare, erstwhile Chairman of the African Union, who during the Dakar (Senegal) conference on intellectuals in 2004 urged African leaders to “open their doors to African intellectuals and give them the attention they deserved so they (intellectuals) could help in the transformation of our countries into lands of freedom and transparency.” Whether they are ignored or persecuted, book professionals cannot be avoided. As I see it and like I did mention in a memorandum written to the Prime Minister in 1999, the way forward for government’s responsibility in building a sustainable book industry in Cameroon is through the convening of a national Book Forum by the Ministries of Culture, Education and Commerce. This forum should address two issues; the creation of a Book Development Council (whose goals are far loftier than what is now called “Copyright Association of literature and Drama”) and the drafting of a book policy for Cameroon. The idea of Book Development Councils world wide was conceived by UNESCO after the Second World War under the slogan “Peace through Education.” The goal was for these councils to coordinate and stimulate the activities of government and private sector agencies in the development of a Book industry of each country to the end that more and better books of all kinds may be available at the lowest possible costs to readers of all ages through out the country”. Unfortunately UNESCO’s initial financial support to the early created Book Councils waned away and most Book Councils in Africa ran out of steam. Indeed during a consultation on the way forward for Book Councils organized by ADEA/UNESCO in Harare – Zimbabwe in 1999, all of us saw two sustainable trends to government responsibility in Book Development Councils in Africa. The first trend is in Ghana, where the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) created in 1978 is an operating agency under the Ministry of Education and Culture. GBDC therefore enjoys total government financial and institutional support like our G.C.E. Board in Cameroon. GBDC is the umbrella book organization that coordinates all book sectors and book

activities in the country. No doubt Ghana is home to a vibrant book industry and a popular international Book Fair that is arguably second in Africa to ZIBF. The second trend is in Zimbabwe where the Zimbabwe Book Development Council (ZBDC) created in 1992 is an independent body of book related organisations but whose Board includes the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. The ZBDC has a secretariat headed by a Director who acts as a link of all related members. While government provides some financial support, ZBDC is autonomous to source for funding nationally and internationally. It is therefore clear that Book Councils that took off solely as NGOs without government support died on arrival. The other issue that a national Book forum should address is the drafting of a national book policy. A national book policy ensures that “books (not just textbooks) become an effective instrument of educational development, social growth, cultural preservation and meaningful communication at national and international levels.”

What all of these indicate is that our government (Ministries of culture, Education, Commerce) now has a large menu to invite book clients (private and public) to a national Book Forum. While this is being considered, government needs to (possibly through its Culture committee in the Assembly) enact an Art policy that makes private corporations which patronise book initiatives enjoy tax-deductible support. Functional Municipal libraries should be part of local government policy and books written or published by Cameroonians should have a certain quota bought by a national library scheme and distributed to the municipal libraries nationwide. For these libraries to be functional their authorities should organise book events like children book week, mobile reading campaigns, book bazaars etc. Cameroonian Publishers in particular and other book professionals should through the Book Development Council benefit from interest-free loans from banks and literary subventions, copyright dues, and periodic grants from government institutions. Indeed an enabling book environment in most African countries has not only produced knowledge for national growth but has broken the barriers of our continental macho society to produce women voices that hold their own in the comity of world scholarship. I am thinking of Veronique Tadjou of Cote d’voire, Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana, Yvonne Vera of Zimbabwe, Mariama Ba

of Senegal, Assia Djebara of Algeria, Nawal El Saadawi of Egypt, Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria, Bessie Head of South Africa, all of whose books were selected among Africa's best books of the twentieth century. I am also thinking of the Nobel laureate of literature Nadine Gordimer of South Africa; the 2003 Caine Prize winner, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor of Kenya; and the 2003 Noma Award laureate Elinor Sisulu of South Africa. Such female literary grains exist in Cameroon waiting for a favourable book condition to sprout into a bumper harvest.

Conclusion

Often times one hears the lame excuse that Africa's oral tradition deprives it from the culture of the written world. We said the same thing about a film culture until Nollywood took all of us by storm. Another flimsy excuse is that with the annihilation of our purchasing power due to external greed and internal graft, books are a luxurious commodity in the market of survival. True as it may be for a teeming lot concerned with bread-and-butter issues, it is not the case with a prebendal elite obsessed with the ostentations exhibition of obscene opulence. It is a matter of individual priority, community interest and national vision. Education is an arm of development and as efforts towards achieving basic education for all in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular intensify, an enabling environment to read and write will continue to be emphasized as a right for everyone and as the vehicle for actualising this aspiration.

Finally, books are like any other industry, with a market that is constantly growing and which could generate jobs. And in these melancholic moments of a structural adjusted and Sino invaded economy, a revamped indigenous book industry in Cameroon could as well be another national lifeline.

Notes

The essay was used as a Discussion paper for one of the sessions of the Writers' workshop during the Edinburgh Book Fair – Scotland in 2006

1. An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper on 12th May 2005; and in *The African Publishing Record* (U.S.A) Volume XXX1 Number 2 2005

Chapter Three

Creative industries, Cultural entrepreneurship and Political statehood (*An Invitation to Anglophone Cameroon Diasporans*)

Kwame Nkrumah's battle-cry of "*Seek ye first the political kingdom...*" is as relevant today as it was when he made this proclamation fifty years ago. So too are Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution movement and Emperor Meiji Tenno's (Mutsuhito) endogenous industrialisation principle that drastically transformed the political statehoods of China and Japan respectively into the superpowers that they are today.

The Anglophone struggle in Cameroon has, in the main, been a political manifesto aimed at reasserting the statehood of Southern Cameroon, West Cameroon or Anglophone Cameroon, appellations that depend on the generational shift or liberation mind-set of the advocates.

From Gorji Dinka to Chief Ayamba through Elad-Munzu Anyangwe and Albert Mukong, the search for a statehood among Anglophone Cameroonians both at home and in the Diaspora has been political; of course the very construction and deconstruction of that statehood was political having been subjected to the historical experiences of Southern Cameroon, West Cameroon state and today mere provincial spaces. This political mutation of the Anglophone Cameroonian points to one constitutional travesty – the degeneration of a viable nation from a constitutional political entity to a parochial and colonial linguistic definition and also to a malleable geographical delimitation. In spite of the controversy and even conspiracy in charting a common political vision among the Anglophones themselves, many have laid down their lives for the cause of an ante-1972 status quo. Unperturbed by the annual October intimidations and sporadic incarcerations, others continue to make their voices heard on what has come to be known as "the Anglophone problem."

Among these foot soldiers of the Anglophone struggle are Anglophone Cameroon Diasporans. As a keen political observer, I have watched the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan engage in picketing, holding conferences, presenting memos, indeed taking every available constructive political action necessary to regain a

paradise lost. They have at least succeeded in making the Anglophone problem one of Cameroon's greatest democratic challenges. The guiding spirit of history and the optimistic tenet of human nature continue to galvanise the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan into pursuing this constitutional goal using political means. However for some it has taken too long and for others it may not happen in their life time. While the political adrenalin continues to flow, may I, from the vantage point of a Delegate of Culture under suspension since 2004, invite the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan to tap from its cultural entrepreneurship; for if the constitutional rape of the geo-political territory has had both political and economic toll, part of its redemption can be situated within the building block of a dynamic and potent creative industry within that same geo-political territory.

That geo-political territory has lost the Tiko, Besongabang, Bali and Weh airports but so is it losing a vibrant media landscape. It has lost its road infrastructure but so is it losing its Art and Culture industry. It has lost Niba Automobile, Fomenky's Direct Suppliers, Nangah Company, Kilo Brother, Boyo Compay, Che Company and Manga Company but so is it losing small and medium sized agro-pastoral industrialization. It has lost its sport glory (P.W.D, Prisons, Powercam football clubs etc) but so is it losing its vocational education heritage. Today's national political rainbow threatens, by omission or commission, to eclipse the distinct Anglophone cultural colours needed to radiate the geo-political territory.

Since the law on media liberalisation in 1990, not a single Anglophone Cameroonian has set up a private Television of national recognition in Cameroon. The Francophone-owned TV stations practise a lopsided bilingual and bicultural programming that, for a shrewd commercial purpose or an erroneous linguistic data, obscures Anglophone interest and value. Yet I have written elsewhere (See the article "STV – the dream and the drift") that the early euphoria of Cameroon TV (CTV) in its formative years was due to the daring and telegenic character of Anglophone journalists and the interactive programmes produced in English. The few Anglophone privately-owned radios are corporate (Church) and very gospel-focused. They all pale into shadow when compared to the politically vocal and development sensitive francophone owned

radio stations beaming from Littoral to the South West and from West to the North West Provinces.

The print industry still lacks a news magazine of International repute when compared to Blaise Pascal Talla's *Jeune Afrique Economie* magazine, Marie Roger Biloa's *Africa International* and *ICI*, the Ghanaian-inspired *New African* magazine, the Nigerian-inspired *Africa Today*, *News Africa*, and *The Voice* magazines all published in the Diaspora.

My first invitation to the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan is to consider investing in the media world in the geo-political territory.

The Arts and culture industry (music, painting, books, wrestling, film, theatre etc) among Anglophones has recorded varying successes nationally and internationally. Indeed the lack of infrastructure and cultural operators to stimulate and fund artistic production and dissemination has been the bane of the Anglophone Arts and culture industry in Cameroon. Yet without any resort to colonial linguistic xenophobia, British – colonised Africa is the cradle of creative industries with a stiff competition from francophone West Africans. Apart from being a poverty alleviation tool, cultural entrepreneurship stamps a national identity even on those who have been dispossessed and disempowered of their political statehood. Infact, even those countries in Africa which, because of their protracted political instability and neocolonial economic servitude are now considered as failed, collapsed, rogue or bunker praetorian states, derive their political existence from their creative industries. My second invitation to the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan is to consider investing in the Arts and Culture industry as producers and publishers of Anglophone works of art.

Another area needing intervention is the twining of economic investors in the Diaspora and the civil society organizations in the geopolitical territory.

Of particular concern is the agro-pastoral sector that should lay to rest the parasitic economy paradigm of cash crops. The geopolitical territory is awash with potentials for endogenous or autocentric industrialization spanning from rice development (Ndop area) sugar production (Mutengene zone), tomato processing (Buea zone), horticulture (mile 14 area), livestock

farming (Muyuka zone) animal husbandry (Jakiri zone) and more. Our innate culture of subsistence and commercial farming can be improved through setting up or strengthening local Cooperative Unions with particular emphasis on providing credits, loans, grants to all stakeholders in the agro pastoral sector. My third invitation to the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan is to consider connecting with other home civil society organizations in order to create small, medium scale industries or enhance the culture of agro-industrial establishments. Lastly, one of the most concrete political legacies in recent memories in the Anglophone liberation paradigm is the creation of the G.C.E Board and the University of Buea. As institutions that are engaged in fine tuning our educational system, they should end up seeing their products self-employed and not just certificate-graduates. One of the greatest sources of unemployment today is the absence of a vocational, technical or creative career that leads our children into a productive rather than a consumer society. Privately -owned schools in the Anglophone sector still focus on General or Grammar Education rather than on Professional input. Compounded by the grim reality that the few Government-owned professional schools in the geopolitical territory have been inundated with Francophones, there is still a remedy in establishing privately-owned schools along the spirit of the Government Trade Center Ombe, Polytechnique (School of Engineering) Yaounde, and Business Administration school in Douala. My last invitation to the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporan is to consider investing in creative or vocational education. All these invitations are in appreciation of the contributions Anglophone Cameroon Diasporans are making by way of remittances towards our family support system and sporadic funding to political parties. Yet there has never been a time for the Diasporans to network among themselves in their various abodes of physical and psychological exile to weave a tapestry of collective survival for their people back home. When Malian President Ahmadou Toumani Toure convened a National Conference in 2004 in Mali, it was to build a synergy between the Malian Diasporan and the economic/cultural battle at the home front.

When the African Union decided to include the African Diasporan (though they have a different historical connotation) as the 54th state of the African continent, it was in recognition of the

vital forces inherent in such a group towards the economic and cultural empowerment of Africa.

When Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni of Cameroon led a 15-person delegation to the United States of America in July 2005, it was to convince Cameroonian Diasporans to link with their motherland in the fight against poverty. From a global dialectics of history, an interface between the Anglophone Cameroon Diasporans and their geopolitical territory on cultural entrepreneurship is a vital ingredient in the political search for constitutional redress. It may, like other experiments, fail to achieve the ultimate goal; but in my opinion every cultural tonic carries along a Mao Tse-Tungian revolution and a Meiji restoration needed for the renaissance of any Kwame Nkrumahian political kingdom.

Note

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The African Nation newspaper* (U.S.A) Volume 1V Number V May 2006

Chapter Four

From Environmental waste to Artistic wealth

Ivonne Ngwa is an Environmental Artist unconscious of her laudable artwaste mission. According to a report in Cameroon Tribune (September 20, 2005) her stand was the center of attraction during the Cameroon Technology and Innovation exhibition organised by the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technology. The magnet of attraction was her art products based on controlled waste (recycled plastic, wrappers and carrier bags). Using different shades of colours of this waste to produce caps, toys, belts, foot gears, bags etc, she has created a cultural industry out of an environmental eyesore.

Ivonne was inspired during her journey to Garoua in May 2003 where she discovered that a once clean town had become the waste capital of all kinds of rubbish. Gutters, culverts and trenches had become the journey's end and waste abode for non biodegradable materials and the urban dwellers only had their noses and eyes to cover as a response to the stench and sight. Ivonne got informed that a foreign TV Channel had produced a documentary on a Beninois lady who specializes in recycling non-biodegradable waste. Contacts were made and Ivonne got the lady to come share her experiences with her (Ivonne) Kinswomen under the canopy of Bafut Women Cultural Association (BAWCA). Today BAWCA owns a showroom in Yaounde that is reputed for the sale of art waste objects. In one brush, Ivonne is contributing to environmental sanitation, poverty alleviation and cultural innovation. A healthy society is not one which produces no waste, but one which recognizes its duty to manage, not ignore its waste.

Creative management

A close look at our towns and country sides reveals how much resourceful thinking is needed to artistically make a living out of recycling and reusing. All it takes is for the Ministries of Environment, Culture as well as Municipal authorities and corporations to identify their environmental problems and solicit the creative ingenuity of its citizenry. While environmental problems are global in Cameroon, municipalities mostly suffer from

litter (badly managed or unmanaged waste). The response has been for municipal authorities to provide garbage trucks, litter bins and trash cans to dispose of this waste (mostly household). How this waste is further managed is another cause for concern. Under other skies, municipal councils create council/cooperative farms, transform the waste into manure, and grow food crops which they sell at a minimal cost in specialized councils/cooperative shops. The Councils also embark on a “rubbish rebate” (a kilo of tomatoes for a bag of waste).

Another response by Councils is through “closing the loop” (the process of recycled materials manufactured into new products and bought by consumers). By manufacturing art from waste, the likes of Ivonne Ngwa are actually closing the loop.

Artwaste culture

Virtually all our cities have a problem with drink corks (not so with winning corks or bottles that are recovered). And if one is to go by our level of drink consumption then the cork waste is a terrible environmental hazard. Yet it is possible to express these corks into mural art or tropical architecture. In other words our traditional village huts and our new found bricked walls could be aesthetically ornamented with drink corks. In most of West Africa, mural painting is an indice of status and family lineage. This mural painting experiment can include plastering with corks. Schools can also use these corks as part of handwork, manual labour, and pedagogic aid.

The cell phone revolution has brought with it the littering of a post – consumer material called ‘air time cards’. Used air time cards can be explored by designers and sculptors for aesthetic purposes. Designers can use them as fabric embellishment, sculptors can use them as pulp for dolls and toys, interior decorators can use them for the interior decoration of walls of public places.

The towns of Tombel and Tiko are famous for snail sales. The shells for snails can be transformed into household art objects. The seashores of Limbe and Kribi are awash with sea waste (coral shells) that can be managed into cultural ornaments. Examples are legion.

Environmental – friendly/Art Awareness Corporations

The aggressive publicity carried out by breweries, tobacco companies and cell phone corporations is unprecedented in Cameroon. It is fashionable to have newspapers with advert inserts of beautiful glossy coloured paper that most readers throw around as litter. Corporations could instead sponsor the central pages or back covers of these newspapers using the same glossy paper carrying sections of their adverts.

Another area for corporation intervention would be in book production. Primary school books and books of general reading could be produced by corporations with their covers carrying the adverts. Only recently the Ministry of Health announced a competition on Aids awareness through the Provincial Technical Groups. A few laureates were awarded but the greater impact would have been to emulate the “Macmillan” example in Zambia where an anthology of stories for youths on AIDS is being marketed. It is an exercise that has enhanced the wealth of children’s literature, showcased new writers and illustrators and reduced environmental waste.

Lastly our billboards carrying photographs on corporation adverts not only litter our streets, as they are renewed every other day, but they depreciate the role of the visual artist. It is in this connection that the Tanzanian government has requested corporations to use drawings rather than detachable posters on public billboards. The art of drawings on bill boards called “sign writing” is both an environmental friendly exercise and art awareness venture.

Collective (p)artnership

There is therefore a dire need for all stake holders to be conscious of the environmental impact of both controlled and non licensed waste and the existing opportunities of transforming such waste into artistic wealth. To attain these objectives, municipal councils and corporations would need to launch Art/Culture competitions, work with the various Ministries (Health, Culture, Tourism, Education etc) and support the original artistic endeavours of individuals like Ivonne. The media also have to focus on our environmental waste not as a pejorative function of litter louts but

as an environmental precursor for civic and artistic minds. This way we may end up building a society of individuals that is informed on environmental awareness through cultural innovation and a commercial vista through artistic entrepreneurship. Indeed boundless imaginations like those of Iyovne Ngwa make us believe not only in the triad of environment–art-commerce, but also in an emerging artwaste culture which emphasizes that one person’s rubbish can be another person’s raw material.

Chapter Five

Towards an Arts and Culture market in Africa *(In memory of Nzante Spée (Cameroonian Artist) and Yvonne Vera (Zimbabwean writer))*

Preliminary

The recent South African Arts and Culture exhibition in Cameroon was both a forum for intercultural dialogue and a launching pad for creating an Arts and Culture market at continental level. Drawn from its rich art diversity, the South African exhibition succeeded in showcasing its performing and visual arts as well as its local cuisine. For those who have visited South Africa, the exhibition was a tip of the iceberg. The “land of Madiba” is home to a splendid immovable cultural patrimony (the 220,000 year old Tswaing meteorite crater, the Voortrekker monument heritage site, the 11km long Moreleta spruit trail etc).

Its film industry epitomized by the Film Resource Unit in Johannesburg has not only played an irrefutable role in the process of democratization and the transformation of the cultural climate of South Africa but is in the vanguard of seeking cooperative ventures with partners in the sub-regions of Southern Africa, West Africa and Central Africa.

On December 7, 2005, the South African cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro alias Zapiro was, in recognition of his role in stimulating social and cultural development in Africa, awarded the prestigious Prince Claus Fund prize (with a whopping cash prize of 100,000 Euro) in Netherlands.

From its Arts Alive International Festival which is an annual September event focusing on the performance arts and performance poetry through its annual March “Time for the writer forum” which brings together emerging and established writers from Africa, to the maiden South African International Book Fair to hold in 2006, South Africa is poised to assume its renaissance role as a pivotal state for a market of arts and culture without boundaries. The relevance of a culture market in Africa is based on the firm conviction that African artists have a right to their own voices, their own stories, their own imaginations. Since the Black World Festivals which took place in Dakar (Senegal) in 1966 and Lagos (Nigeria) in 1977, there has hardly been a veritable Festival of

Arts and Culture of recognizable continental magnitude. With the creation of the African Union and NEPAD, there is a need to chart an innovative and ambitious cultural policy for Africa that would integrate cultural impact assessment into development framework.

Government initiatives

Initiatives like those of the South African High Commission in Cameroon need to be replicated in African Embassies and High Commissions within the continent. Government would have to review the role of cultural counselors or Attaches and equip them with the wherewithal to promote and trade indigenous Arts. This presupposes that the Ministries of Culture (attached or autonomous) would have to transcend the ululation culture (culture for political entertainment), for, culture is not just an event it is a process; it is not only holistic but historical; it is not lip service to political triumph but a life service to human civilization. It is one of the ways in which man finds his bearing in the world. Governments must recognize that spaces of cultural mutations embrace the vision of performing, visual, plastic arts and the prisms of art galleries, museums, heritages and sites. A national culturescape should therefore consist of an inventory of national artists and a directory of material and non material cultural patrimony. A coherent and holistic cultural ideology serves as a magnet for international attraction and an export of national identity. A relative successful area of government action in art/culture trade is the book sector. Endeavours by Government to support International Book Fairs have paid off in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt. Each year these Book fairs are the market places of ideas and the cutting edge of book trade in Africa. Other areas include the film festival (FESPACO) in Burkina Faso and design promotion (FIMA) in Niger. Unfortunately apart from sporadic seed support to artists and periodic cultural competitions, other sectors in Arts and Culture still suffer from lack of adequate government action in Africa. This vacuum is being filled by civil society actors through the creation of cultural industries and individual resource networking.

Civil society action

Whether as individuals or associations, the civil society in Africa is vibrant in Arts/culture creativity and transnational cultural exchange, albeit with a diminishing donor intervention and a decline in indigenous consumption pattern. The design industry was revolutionized by the late Malian designer Chris Seydou. By using rich traditional African fabrics (Kinte, bogolan, rabol etc) Chris Seydou torpedoed the Eurocentric influences on Africa's tropical design. After Seydou's death in 1994, Alphadi of Niger, Etienne Marcel of Cote d'Ivoire and other African designers set a new fashion agenda with creations that celebrate the value of Africa's textile heritage and with markets spanning from Sandiaga in Senegal to Dantokpa in Cotonou- Benin.

The film industry continues to excel from the pioneer contributions of Sembene Ousmane (Senegal), Pierre Yamoegoue (Burkina Faso), and Bassek ba Kobhio (Cameroon) to the Nollywood phenomenon in Nigeria.

Rhythms and sounds of Africa's musical griots and gurus resonate across the continent's colonial boundaries as the music industry draws support from individual production houses and mega events like the Kora Award initiated by the Beninois Ernest Covy.

The carnival tradition (pageant and colourful parade) that was borrowed from Africa and exported to the Caribbean and Latin America has now been reclaimed by Oumou Sy and popularized in Senegal. Cultural industries are being set up by nationals outside their countries of origin like the Cameroonian Werewere Liking's special village for the artistic education of young people in Cote d'Ivoire and the Cameroonian photographer Samuel Fosso's self-portrait photography established in Central African Republic.

Sculptors like Lilian Naboulime of Uganda and Kerster of Mozambique; Curators like Joseph Ndiaye of Senegal and Kinni Yen Kinni of Cameroon; Architects like Mick Pearce of Zimbabwe and Adeljelil Temimi of Tunisia; Painters like Hassan Musa of Sudan and Malangantana of Angola, Archivists like Henry Mbain of Cameroon and Ellen Nambila of Namibia yearn to break their national boundaries and share together a continental pool of creativity and commerce.

Socio-cultural activists and Art historians like Aminata Traore of Mali, Mahmood Mamdani of Uganda and Femi Kuti of Nigeria need to be provided with a continental platform that will advance their discourse on the interrelationship of economics, politics and culture as well as the corrosive cultural effects of globalization. Indeed since the African politician, economist and traditional ruler insist on selling the African soul back to the invader, the artist must insist on establishing an organic link between Africans and their continent.

Media

There cannot be an African culture business without an Africa-oriented media. Aspects of our cultural heritage and art history continue to occupy peripheral spaces in the print and audio visual media in Africa. And so the young generation are becoming repositories of a “banking culture”; alienated from the immense repertoire of Africa’s creative process, the young turn to the ubiquitous art/culture paradigms of modernization (Westernization). Yet, every credible media organs leads; it does not follow. It does not only recount or narrate the artistic exploits of cultural entrepreneurs, it force feeds its consumers with a menu of art and culture repossession. Like Chinua Achebe puts it, ‘Until the lion produces its own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter.’

African Union

In tandem with government and civil society action, the African Union would need to formulate an art/cultural policy for the continent. It would need to organize festivals like the Festival of Arts and Culture at sub-regional levels, support specialized training in the arts and craft (through sub-regional workshops) and encourage personnel for cultural administration. Sub-regional consultations on Arts and Culture would develop a data base of art products and an art bank of consumer needs. This would provide the necessary mechanism for trade between artists and the seven hundred million potential consumers. It would also help the African Union define actions and strategies for the production and marketing of Arts and Culture and eventually create a culture citizenship in Africa.

Finale

Some of these objectives can only be attained if individual countries overcome the fits of national jingoism and xenophobia. Art policies should, while favouring nationals not exclude or discriminate against non-nationals.

Visa procedures within the continent must circumvent the gigantic red tapes. Visa fees need to be affordable; and art taxes need not be prohibitive.

The freedom of movement of people, goods and services still remain a major handicap to African Unity. Yet an African art/culture common market is such a feasible enterprise with spill over on an economic boom.

The challenge today therefore lies on all stakeholders who must reinvent a new cultural mentality and art vision that would provide a conducive climate for the creation of a viable and vibrant Art and Culture market in Africa.

Note

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The Post* newspaper of November 7, 2005

Chapter Six

Cameroonian Cultural Industries: Potentials & Promises

'Only those nations which are culturally solid ever indelibly influence the course of history', Professor Kountchou Kouomegni (former Minister of Information and Culture)

The three main links that constitute the Cultural Industry chain are Production, Promotion and Consumption. These links represent the culture triangle needed to energise an industry whose aesthetic nature and artistic values mirror the essence of human civilization. Attempts by both civil society actors and governments have aimed at transforming Africa's indigenous culture from mere populist folklore to a national character.

Governments in Africa are struggling to make their people be who they are which is identity, rather than make their people what others want them to be which is universality. And so more and more culture is given greater autonomy through its administrative detachment from the Ministries of Information, Education, Sports, Tourism, etc, etc. But without a mental Cultural Revolution and greater commitment to the ideals of a new culturesscape our present routine approach and monolithic interpretation to a cultural autonomy will paradoxically lead to the withering of a thousand cultures. Hence the need to examine the state and future of our cultural industry under the triangle of production, promotion and consumption.

Production

Cameroon is awash with artists who have enormous productive capacity; but there must be professionalism and formalisation. To be professional means distinguishing their various roles as Artists. A musician does not necessarily have to be a song writer, a composer and a manager all combined; a writer does not have to be a literary agent, a bookseller and publisher all in one. I happened to have visited the famous Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mtukudzi eight years ago, and was pleasantly surprised to discover that a musician can own an office complete with a secretariat. A visit to the International Book Fairs in Ghana or Zimbabwe leaves one with a

well organized book sector. While today's productive phase needs professionalism, tomorrow's phase calls for formalisation. Arts and culture needs to be taught in schools.

It is unfortunate that from Primary to University level, very little is known about our cultural patrimony. Gone are the primary school days when hand work consisted of cloth dying, clay modelling and wood sculpture; remember the lesson on writing which formed the basis of calligraphy; remember theatre competition among schools. Indeed the Youth week provided a nursery of raw talents even though these talents were not followed up to the end. At least there was something to show that innate creativity could blossom. Today even our universities organise arts and culture jamborees without providing avenues for skill-based orientation. Even our Faculty of Arts churns graduates who have little or no knowledge of the kind of art that Universities provide in Nigeria or elsewhere.

In Mozambique, the government has created a national cultural Association called 'Nucleus of Arts' which is dedicated to developing Arts in secondary schools.

In Zimbabwe and Zambia and by extension most countries in East Africa, governments have instituted National Arts Councils at divisional levels which by themselves have semi autonomous status

In Tanzania, Artists themselves have created Arts groups. The two prominent ones are the Kinondoni and nyumba ya sanaa each recruiting members according to age and forms of specialization. The Kinondoni Art group recruits members as young as four years old and specialises on drawing and painting. The nyumba ya sanaa is made up of adolescents above twenty and their creative activities are diversified. Still in Tanzania and as far back as when Julius Nyerere instituted the ujamaa vision, traditional rulers were encouraged to organize cultural festivals seasonally with the aim of rooting cultural wealth in the minds of the youths. If only our own chiefs returned to their roles as custodians of cultures rather than megaphones of party politics then the *lela* in Bali, the *Ndie* of the Bakossis, the *fantasia* of the North and the other lores and mores of our people would make more meaning to the de-cultured youths in Cameroon.

Promotion

In Angola, a law exists that ensures that corporations and parastatals within the locality of an Association of Artists budget a certain cultural fee which is given to the Artist association annually. In Tanzania, the state owned Tanzanian Handicraft marketing corporation makes contacts for local craft people to sell their craft easily outside the country. But the most pentecostal art promotion strategy by the Tanzanian government consists of forcing companies to use artists in designing (through drawings) bill boards, conference halls and even government premises. In other words photographic adverts are minimal giving rise to a new lucrative art business called “sign writing”.

Five years ago, I was in the company of the famous comedian of the Benin sitcom called “Taxi brousse” en route to Benin. He told me the success of culture awareness in a small nation like Benin was due to its promotion on both the state and private media. Television channels in Benin concentrate first on local programs which are thematically anchored to their traditions.

It is the same for Nigeria, Libya and Mali where the promotion of local dress codes, local language use and local topical arts issues are the central mission of promotion. This was the case with our CTV (Cameroon Television) in the late eighties and early nineties but today the Brazilians and the West have invaded our cultural privacy (if it is not “Marima, it is “The Promise”, if it is not “Camilla” it is “Helena”). What single Cameroonian telefilm do we remember? It is because of such national Art promotion that most countries have come to be culturally recognised like the film culture or FESPACO in Burkina Faso, the Nollywood culture in Nigeria, the visual art syndrome in Botswana, the stone sculpture in Zimbabwe, the writing/reading culture in East Africa and the plastic arts culture in Mozambique.

Consumption

We must be the primary consumers of our own culture, and here again some countries stand out conspicuously. In most of West and North Africa, the wearing of local attire is a national ideology. Africa has an economic market of about 900 million people and so does not need to export its Art and Culture if the African people

decide to consume their own arts products. I believe in inter-cultural dialogue, but we must first of all respect what is ours. Globalization does not mean we should be living on borrowed culture, for indeed a cultural holocaust awaits any country whose youths buy a one way ticket to Westernization. It is more important to ask ourselves what we are giving to the world than what we are receiving. While it is true that the world would be less interesting were each nation to retreat to a small cultural cocoon, it is also a reality that the same world would be less colourful were all of us to be copycats of alien cultures. Africa must stamp the global passport with Africa's visa because Africa is where all cultures began. It is the place that still influences the great artists in dance, music, sculpture and brush.

Far from resorting to some romantic cultural nostalgia, I still dream of our world of African Writers Series that showed us the bonds of our kinship, the communal ties of human relation and the didactic message in our oral tradition. I stand by the vision that the proceedings of the National Forum on Culture held on 23-26 August 1991 had for Cameroon. The proceedings are indeed a culture roadmap for Cameroon because they beam their traffic lights on our national languages, our culinary art, our traditional sports our local rites and indigenous cultural inventories, our local legends and mythologies, the values in traditional medicine, our reading culture, designs, culture awards, our film and audiovisual sector, our indigenous knowledge systems, our memories and heritages, our fashion indeed the whole gamut of our cultural industries. Those proceedings should not only serve as an inspiration and framework to our policy makers and artists but should challenge all of us to see culture beyond the frivolous prism of a five minute traditional dance meant for political entertainments and during which politicians descend like kings with bank notes to appreciate the jest of court clowns. Yes we need a Conference on Culture in Cameroon to see the road we have covered since the 1991 Forum and make projections based on comparative studies from other African countries.

The Ministry for culture, other Ministries like Tourism, Commerce and Education the culture committee in Parliament, Diplomatic services, and the mega corporations should support the cultural industries in Cameroon. We need to protect and preserve

our cultural heritage not just by burning cultural clones but by building sustainable creative programmes enshrined in the 1991 culture forum. For culture is not just about bureaucratic routine, it is activity-related on programs that impact on the duality of culture and development; it is not just about multiplying meetings, it is about writing feasible projects that enhance the creation and dissemination of cultural goods and services; it is not about identifying political party adherents; it is about rallying all vectors of knowledge production necessary for the stimulation of our local creative industries and developing cultural capacity for wealth creation.

In 2003 my association, AFRICaphonie organised a seminar in Buea on the theme “The state of Arts and Culture in Cameroon” and many participants were of the opinion that some of the missing links in culture today are the lack of training facilities for artistes and the paucity of cultural infrastructure in the country. In June 2007 we recommended after the “African Integration Workshop” in Marrakech, Morocco that African governments should establish a pan African Arts Council to help strengthen the creative sector. In September 2006 we resolved at the end of a “Conference on Cultural diversity for social cohesion and sustainable development” that held in Sun City South Africa to engage our governments to build capacities of the cultural industries, cultural institutions and autonomous arts centres in our various countries. Before then I was part of the Cameroonian civil society group that attended the 2005 Dakar Senegal “International Conference on Cultural Diversity” that addressed the subject of drafting and instituting cultural policies in our countries (Those of Tanzania and Kenya are simply inspirational)

Finally, the future for Artistes themselves is predicated on three principles: Artistes should learn to empower themselves as independent actors of the civil society through their own associations and conceived cultural activities; they should embark on opportunities within and outside government circles that promote Art and Culture; and the Cameroon government should regard Arts/Culture as a political triumph which concerns policy makers and the civil society.

Chapter Seven

Mongo Beti: The Gadfly

My generation grew up with a romantic rumour that linked Alexandre Biyidi Awala, alias Mongo Beti, to a jilted love relationship between him and the eventual spouse of a highly reputed politician of the First Republic in Cameroon. I am still not sure anyone within my age bracket has bothered to cross-check the authenticity of this rumour; but consciously or unconsciously, we came to interpret the indicting, confrontational and crusading mood in Mongo Beti's works as a literary-cum-political treatise rooted in emotional chagrin and vendetta. Time and history have proven us wrong, for if this emotional vendetta was the yeast of his works, then his consistent attack on lacklustre leadership in Cameroon was the flour of his writing career.

It was Ben Okri, the London-based Nigerian writer and winner of the 1991 Booker Prize, who once said 'If you want to know what is happening to a nation, find out what's happening to its writers.' Writing under the names of Eza Boto and Mongo Beti, Alexandre Biyidi Awala gave African creativity a long cry of revolt and rebellion; he painted a picture of a conscientious visionary bent on dealing with the wounds and consciences of political demagogues. He brought into focus the social role of a writer. The writer had always functioned in African society as the recorder of mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time. Whenever powermongers become lost in the journey of personality cults, when the politicians' ship is drowning in the ocean of dictatorship, it is the writer who serves as the compass pointing the ship of state to the shores of sanity. Mongo Beti cast himself in that mould.

As a nationalist and revisionist writer, and therefore one who saw the future through the prism of history, Mongo Beti's works exposed the betrayal of the true freedom fighters towards Cameroon's independence. He saw the immediate post-independent leadership in Cameroon as a puppet of the French metropolis. In his work *Remember Ruben* (1974), Mongo Beti takes the reader on the liberation journey of Africa and the African personality; liberation from the forces of neo-colonialism; liberation

from new Western forms of exploitation which have found new expressions in neoliberalism and globalization. Even though he spent 32 years of political exile mostly in France, Beti linked Cameroon's and by extension Africa's underdevelopment to France's imperialism. During the France-Africa summit hosted in Yaoundé, Cameroon in January 2001, he organized an 'anti-France-Africa Summit' in front of his bookshop *Les Peuples Noirs*.

I saw Mongo Beti as a writer-activist, a gadfly; one who ought to lodge a claim for artistic leadership but who also had a desire to lay emphasis on the democratic dividend of peace, social justice and economic empowerment. Mongo Bet was once asked during a round table conference at the University of Boston whether he considered himself a writer. He replied 'I am not a writer; I am someone who writes.' Indeed he chose to be a writer when he failed, as an African, to be a journalist in France. He always wanted to speak directly to people through journalism not fiction. For, according to him, fiction was subject to diverse interpretations sometimes far away from the original intention of the author. To him, writing was not just an art but an arm. He believed that if in Europe writing was a mere intellectual exercise, in Africa, writing must serve a purpose.

I consider Mongo Beti's decision to be active in the Social Democratic Front (the main Opposition Party in Cameroon) as a blunder. Even though this decision permitted him to see first hand the systematic and incoherent internal contradictions of the Cameroon political élite, irrespective of party leanings, it compromised his independence as a literary guru. There is no doubt that before his death he had lost favour and made enemies with most influential members of the political elite (journalists, politicians, academics etc.). With such an obsession for perfection, Beti must have been a lonely man with no permanent friends (except Professor Ambroise Kom?), nor permanent enemies (except any regime in power?). He knew that the Cameroon political élite, across party board, needed to translate their slogans into people-oriented development. He had had enough of post-independence political rhetoric and dreamt of a Cameroon that would assert its democratized development within the sub-region. At last, that dream may eventually come true, but without the dreamer. He dreamt his last on 7 October 2001. Even though the

President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, sent an official condolence message to the family, the Betis insisted that the burial rites remain strictly a family affair - no official crocodile tears, no official posthumous medals, no official sycophantic eulogies. Odile Biyidi, Mongo Beti's French wife, buried her husband the way he lived - simply and solitary.

In his book *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* (1999), a comical and yet scathing attack on dictatorships, Mongo Beti says of death: 'It is a passage through a dark forest beyond which lies a sunny glade.' Before we all set eyes on that 'sunny glade', the world has lost a writer-gadfly who took his shot at those making a living on the pauperization and criminalization of the state. My generation shall continue to be inspired by his pan-African nationalism and to be fulfilled by his legendary vision. It is gladdening to note that, of the few Cameroonian writers shortlisted for Africa's 100 Best Books of the twentieth century organized by the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, Mongo Beti's book *The Poor Christ of Bomba* won a place among the final list of 100 laureates. But wait a minute, his new book *Pre-autobiography of Mongo Beti* is expected to hit the bookstands very soon (his last reading of the manuscript was two months before his death).

Finally, having read his works, our task now is to pursue the trails of Mongo Beti who stood on the rugged side of people power not on the aristocratic banks of prebendalism. Mongo Beti is dead! Long live Mongo Beti!

Chapter Eight

Spectrum Television (STV): The Dream and the Drift

In October 2004, a multimedia organisation called Spectrum Group hit the audiovisual landscape in Cameroon with a new dual channel outfit called Spectrum Television (STV). STV's arrival threatened the foundation of Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) – the only state TV Cameroonians have been obliged to watch since 1985. CRTV itself had dulled the information, education and entertainment psyche of its viewers through programmes that were alienated from Cameroonians, and through a managerial style that was obsessed with patronage and megalomania. No doubt then, STV's arrival was a relief from the boredom of monotony that CRTV had excelled in. There was every reason to be glued to STV.

First, the media organ launched two channels simultaneously with the promise that STV1 would cater for programmes in English and STV 2 for programmes in French.

Second the Senegalese – born General Manager, Mactar Silla brought rich professional credentials yet a simple and discreet managerial style that contrasted with the omnipotent and omnipresent character of the pre-Vamoulke CRTV epoch. Silla was the antithesis of “Supervision Generale”.

Third the journalists cut for themselves an ambitious and assiduous profile. As a matter of fact their strength was paradoxically their lack of professional exposure, their sense of community communication and their spirit of consumer – market based programming.

As early as 6:30 daily, Lulu Efangé's talkshow “Good Morning Cameroon” became the wake up alarm clock for Cameroonians. In her eyes, Lulu began to see the meteoric stardom of the South African ‘Felicia’ and the African American ‘Oprah’. From the signature cockerel jingle to its content, the one and a half “Good Morning Cameroon Show” encapsulated the cultural diversity of our land and the human interest approach in development journalism.

The 7pm and 9pm news in English and French respectively featured the flip side of government functions

(seminars, installations, inaugurations etc). The market scenes, our picturesque towns, our informal and civil society etc beamed on STV fed us with a dream of a new television order in Cameroon. Instantly by capturing the sights and sounds of our country, STV became a hit with viewers. So barely six months of existence, STV went into a public show to present their balance sheet and to chart a way forward based ostensibly on their in-house evaluation and monitoring.

I could not therefore resist STV's invitation to join a battery of political observers on 28 December 2004, to analyse the 2004 World events. This occasion provided me the opportunity to appreciate the state of the art equipment and more importantly the hospitality of the support, technical and professional crew.

One year after (October 2005), the dream for perfection still remains in the STV Studio but time has caught up with the inconsistencies in mission and the blur of vision typical of any new and ambitious institution. Two areas stand out for appraisal: Official Language spread (bilingual (bicultural background) and homegrown program content (Cameroonian/African colour).

STV's language spread (English/French) policy is already being contaminated with the diglossia disease that makes the use of French language lord it over the English language. And this is not about the Anglophone/Francophone dichotomy; it is about programmes in English and French. The fundamental misjudgement of STV, like some private and public agencies in Cameroon, is to confuse political linguistic data (8 of 10 provinces are French speaking) with the socio-linguistic reality (second language learning is on the rise). This misjudgement consequently influences the language usage ratio and dents the public relation image of most corporations in Cameroon. The truth, at least with the Nollywood experience and the Agatha Moses success story, is that Francophones in Cameroon are attracted to anything good in English, willy-nilly. Even those who choose to ignore "the Anglophone problem" do not hide their admiration for the quality of TV programmes in English and the language mastery of Anglophone journalists. The early CTV (Cameroon Television) programmes like "minute by minute, Sports Parade, Focus on Arts, English News etc

constituted the favourite menu of Francophone viewers. Names like Eric Chinje, Akwanka Joe Ndifor, Ben Berka Njovens, Julius Wamey, Robert Abunaw, Rose Epie etc., still remain legendary in the minds of Francophones. Conversely, programmes like Q.S.D, Province à la une, Actualité Hebdo, Evasion, Telepodium, Silence – on joue, etc., attracted a wide range of Anglophones viewers. Charles Ndongo, Jean Materne Ndi, Joseph Anderson Le, Dieudonne Pigui, Denise Epote etc were Francophone TV stars to Anglophone viewers of CTV. I guess it was the same with Cameroon Tribune newspaper when it had separate editions of English and French. In this era of multiculturalism, language is a social tool that breaks the sensitive though sometimes legitimate barriers of political linguistic stereotype. STV's lame response to this phenomenon has sometimes been either a flawed concurrent bilingualism (epitomised by one of its glamorous presenters who switches effortlessly on the same stance from English and French), or a biased alternate bilingualism (epitomised by two francophone presenters whereby one speaks fluent French and the other approximate English).

This takes away the credit performance of the news anchors (especially the ladies) who are all doing a great job in the English and French news editions. "Good Morning Cameroon" would hold its own if it remained English in content with all guests speaking nothing but English. It is supposed to be the only talkshow in English among a plethora of programmes in French (Espace 90, 7Hebdo, Assurance, JDB, Les bourgeois, Lumière de l'islam, STV Direct etc in which I have never heard a guest speak in English). Every other programme by Anglophone presenters is pompously monitored by Francophone presenters in a so called bilingual feature (Wake-up, On the ball, STV Mag, Carrefour, Supermarket etc.). The announcement spots are basically in French (STV – votre tele).

If "Good morning Cameroon" is such a popular slot it can have its equivalent in French as it is with Monday show and Vendredi show in CRTV today. This therefore leaves STV with programmes in English that are foreign and imported (cartoon strips, Africa Report, Business Africa, Nigerian films, Camila, Oprah, Taxi driver, M-net programs etc). Is this paucity of local

programmes in English as a result of biased in-house policy or the creative/intellectual sloth of Anglophone journalists in STV?

The second problem with STV is the scarcity of homegrown programmes. Homegrown programmes are not only video clips; they are our entire Arts/ culture, customs/ traditions, craft/creed, history/values, ecosystem/environment, news/views and our more/lore which offer a comprehensive overview of the people and places that make Cameroon unique. Indeed local programme entrepreneurship is becoming an endangered species in the totality of our media. Yet the popular Nollywood today is built on the foundation of telefilms beamed on Nigerian Television channels in the years of yore. A sister channel Canal 2 International is already excelling in this domain, albeit with the same French language hegemony and a strong Bami flavour. Who does not know of the mega success of telefilms or plays featuring Godfrey Tangwa, Kwasen Gwangwa'a, Vanessa Sona, Mejame Njikang, Joyce Abunaw, etc? Who forgets the popularity of the soap opera called "The trials of Passion" in the CTV days?

The Observer newspaper of England (of April 24, 2005) reported that a Cameroonian playwright Florence Ayisi won the "Prix Art et Essai" prize at the Cannes film festival early this year. Her acclaimed documentary called "Sisters in law" was shot in Kumba, features Vera Ngassa and Beatrice Ntuba and talks of women's roles in a Cameroon court. A new song titled "Tatters" is presently breaking the charts in London. The song, a mixture of soul, jazz and African pop, is by the London-Zimbabwean singer Netsayi. Netsayi has revealed that the song is based around the poem "Our history" (to precolonial Africa) by the Cameroonian poet Mbella Sonne Dipoko from which the song's extraordinary refrain "falling in tatters like the whipped wings of butterflies" is taken.

Like Chinua Achebe puts it "Why do we go so far in the forest to look for a herb that is just growing in our backyard?" A generation will be lost in home education and information if the rich diversity of our indigenous culture and the wide array of historical patrimony are not reflected in our own media. It is worth noting that the best of CRTV programs came out when the Mendo Ze management launched a competition called

“Provinciade”. Indeed the financial trophies went to those provinces that drank from the fountain of their homegrown settings. Television Producers, Bob Ekukole Margaret Fombe, Christopher Selambi, Caro Kilo Bara and Mathias Kome know what I am talking about.

I was therefore stunned to read a Press Release in *The Post* newspaper (August 22, 2005) to the effect that STV had, from 20 August 2005, been given a “New look”.

This major innovation, according to STV management, beyond the language is focussed towards the youths from 15 to 35 years (which keeps me out) in Cameroon as well as women and sports fans. This “new look STV package” has so far been local foreign video clips, Oprah show, European and Latin American soccer, and a few pan African programs. In a nutshell STV1 is now the quintessence of M-net channel. The flame of local colour is fading away into the ashes of neocultural servitude. The strength of our bilingual character is whittling down to the vagaries of entertainment and the vicissitudes of education. Haba Mactar!

Free-to air channels in Africa are supposed to break the monolithic interpretation of worldview and export across our national and continental frontiers the uniqueness of our self view.

As STV celebrates its first birthday, it should draw from its youthful exuberance and tap from Cameroon’s enormous touristic/cultural/ historical/ economical/ social potentials necessary to make STV not just a TV in Cameroon but a Cameroonian Television.

In this vein, STV would need to stick to its original dream of two channels (STV1 for local programs in English and STV 2 for programs in French). It needs to consider inviting old TV hands to conduct in- service or on the job training for its young staff. It needs to cut down on the numerous talkshows in French and produce documentaries, sitcoms and soap operas that provide a window on contemporary Cameroonian/African life. It needs to explore possibilities of state subventions, corporation sponsorship, sale of their own homegrown programs and grants from television moguls necessary to run the expensive ventures of two channels and local production.

In the absence of Gallup polls, audience survey, interactive listserve and pulse polls which arguably provide scientific television ratings, I am convinced that appraisals based on free consultancies like my write up can help STV get back to its original dream and avoid its imminent drift.

Chapter Nine

Alternative Democratic models in Africa

Introduction

If Democracy is defined as a system of Government by which the government itself is constantly subject to re-ratification by the electorate, then democracy cannot rest on a single model in Africa. The trouble with Africa is not whether it should continue to use elections as yardstick to evaluate attempts to break away from the authorization forms of power in African countries (Bakary 1998) but whether Africa should continue to rely on multipartyism as the panacea to economic development and political stability. The issue of democracy is complex and subtle. No definition of democracy exists in law, nor is there a global consensus over the political meaning of the concept. What does exist is an understanding that democracy is a universal value, one, which open to different legitimate interpretations deriving from various historical, cultural and regional experience of the various people around the world. In short, a modern democratic system is one which the people are able to hold heir representatives accountable for the policies they pursue or the decision they make in the public sphere (Bangura 1998). Should this system be achieved by elite competition or by mass mobilization?

The first part of my paper discusses why from 1994, elections on a general scale have not led to stability in Africa. The second part provides an overview of how Africa should expand its democratic space through indigenous democratic models, and the third (Conclusion) focuses on the Nurturing or Consolidation of Democracy in Africa.

Electoral Choices (why these electoral futilities?)

The first reason for electoral failures since 1994 is that African leaders bowed to multiparty democracy out of convenience rather than conviction; there was concession without conversion. Tied to this is the overemphasis of election at the tertiary level (Presidential elections). The International Community does not hype other elections (local Government) like it does with the Presidential. The

impression therefore is that of a two-horse race (Ruling party and Opposition parties) where the Ruling party clings to power at all cost while the Opposition fights for power by all means. The struggle to control the centre has taken precedence over democracy per se.

In a bid to stay in power, constitutional tinkering and electoral adjustments are being done in favour of the ruling parties and to elongate tenure of office of the incumbents.

Another reason is the cost of running elections to the detriment of National Development. Since 1990, African countries have spent over one billion U.S dollars on the formation and servicing of multiparty system of governance (Chipenda 1996). Without a visible pattern of development after elections, voters seem to be suffering from electoral fatigue.

To be properly democratic, elections must be conducted in accordance with certain organizational precepts. Most importantly, there should be a fair and objective institution with non-partisan state manly persons of integrity for administering the process from voter registration, up to the declaration of the result. Unfortunately, in most cases, the incumbent party sets up a body that is neither neutral nor independent.

Lastly, the masses themselves have hardly mobilized behind a candidate whose ideological manifesto (where it does exist) suits them. Instead, it was the ethnic extraction or sinecure promises of the candidates that mattered. Africans failed to realize that if the wind of Independence in the 1960s blew for the transfer of power from colonial rule to African rule, then the wind of democracy in the 1990s blew for the transfer of power from the coterie of bureaucratic elite to the mass of industrious peasants. But were the masses adequately prepared for multiparty democratic elections based on party ideology?

Indigenous Democratic models

Here, the focus is on homegrown electoral/democratic systems that take into account value system (historical, religious, political nature), social stability, economic development, electoral strength and civic culture. Another area of emphasis is on Primary (Local government) and Secondary (Parliament) levels of elections i.e. the bottom-up approach. These models seem to favour mass

mobilization against elite competition, decentralization and equity against centralization and clientelism. Among others, I will like to discuss four of these models

Umbrella democracy

This entails the conceptualization of two programmes based on different ideologies of the country. These ideologies now find expression in two structures:- party platform and/or list system. If it is within a party platform, the parties are named and the masses are obliged to identify themselves with any of them. This experiment was tried in Tanganyika in 1964 when Julius Nyerere found there was little or no opposition for his Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in Parliament. A commission was appointed to investigate how best to achieve the democratic principles of choice under the umbrella of a single party. The commission affirmed the principle of a single party but linked it every five years to an electoral competition among members of the same party, with the people choosing from different candidates at election time.

About the same period (1969) in Cameroon, the one party trend became obsolete with two principal currents of thought in the party i.e Hard-line and Liberal wings. The Liberal wings wanted progressive reforms like the nomination of candidates for the various elections, (including Presidential) by the party Congress instead of by the political bureau, and the introduction of a two-list system (Joseph 1978).

Tanganyika and Cameroon were therefore technically not one party states but countries with two single-party system, divided by list platform and parallel to each other.

In 1992, General Ibrahim Babanginda of Nigeria created a transition programme with political parties prescribed by the Government: Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC). The Government supplied the manifestoes and financing. Unfortunately lots of power scheming and external forces hijacked this experiment and the victor (Moshood Abiola) of what Nigerians still consider the fairest and freest elections ever held in that country was incarcerated, and he later died.

No party democracy

This involves the banning or restriction of party in favour of individual initiative. Where parties exist, they function under restricted circumstances since all political exercises whether on democracy or on economy are carried out under a national political network. There are two main emphases in this network:-

- i. The existence of citizens to run for elections on their individual merit rather than under their party canopies.(Independent or private candidacy)
- ii. The effective devolution of decision-making process to grassroots structures. In recent times, three leaders have stood out in the practice of the no party democracy in Africa: President Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso (1983-1987), Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (1986-2006) and Muammar Gadaffi of Libya (since 1969). A no-party democracy operates on three levels:
 - ❖ The presence of a charismatic leader with a hero cult;
 - ❖ An indigenous national ideology revised periodically;
 - ❖ A decentralized participatory structure

Through the no party democracy, emphasis is shifted from truncated partisan elections to vibrant community development; from parochial power zoning to collective nation management; and from cultural imperialism to cultural integrity. The key to the progress even to survival of Africa was not to be found merely in the multiplying of the party rivalries at the centre of the executive power, however much a structure rivalry might be desirable; it would be found rather in devolving executive power to a multiplicity of locally representative bodies-it would be found in re-establishing “vital link” within the fabric of society (Davidson 1992).

Consociational democracy

According to Burgsdoff, the alternative to the dogmatic proclamation of a multiparty system is a different path to democracy available for Sub-Saharan Africa, which is based on what Canadian political scientists Almond and Verba call the

Consociational democracy concept. This term applies to a constitutional structure, which is canton-based, as in present day Switzerland. This federalist grassroots approach seems to correspond well to societies characterized by distinct ethnic cleavages and a fragmented socio-economic structure (Burgsdoff 1992). This model of democracy is based on the three important principles.

- ❖ There is a restriction to party politics:-
- ❖ A specific ethnic group enjoys maximum autonomy with respect to its day-to-day affairs (thus the direct responsibility of the people living in one distinct region is confined to that particular area);
- ❖ As regards representation at the federal (national) level each ethnic group elects its own delegates or representative. Matters of nation wide concern are decided at the federal level by the community delegates who make up, so to speak, the national government.

On November 22, 1994, the Constitutional Assembly in Ehtiopia came about with a provision, which allows for 11 regions or kilils, so drawn that each of the main ethnic groups dominates. The ideal is for such a system to encourage a graduated college approach from the base to the apex of power.

In practice, the system would work as follows: at local level all eligible adults elect their representatives (at this level every voter knows every candidate well and can therefore make valid judgment on the candidate's suitability for public Office). Representative so elected constitute the Electoral College which elects members of the next tier government (Parliament) and these elect the highest authority in the country (Ogbonna 1998).

Let us not forget that in the Athenian city state, where democracy was first practiced in the ancient world, the council of five hundred which constituted the steering committee of the Assembly was composed of 50 members drawn from each of the 10 tribes and that the board of magistrates comprising 10 members was also chosen on a tribal basis; Athens enjoyed peace and stability based on this system before she was conquered by the Macedonians.

This experiment recognizes the existence of ethnicity and it is using the energy of its people by creating autonomous self-governing regions. Close to this consociational system is an electoral approach based on ROTATION or power zoning. In Sani Abacha's gory stint as Nigeria's leader (1993-1999) the constitutional Conference made some innovative ideals based on certain peculiar situation that are native to Nigeria. Among them was the clause "sharing out and rotation of the major political offices in the country to six geo-political zones into which the country was partitioned." By so doing; the fear of marginalization and domination was put to rest. Indeed although Nigeria did not formally become a federal nation until the introduction of the Lyttleton constitution of 1954, regional federalism had actually begun under the Macpherson constitution of 1951. At this time, Nigeria was a federation of three regions revolving around three dominant ethnic groups attached to three major political parties (Akionla 1998).

Other countries with distinct tribal cleavages like Burundi and Rwanda can emulate this system, According to Ogbonna, the greatest advantage of this system is that with the possible exception of the grassroots level electorate, all the remaining electoral colleges are composed of literate voters who can use the benefit of their literacy to make a valid choice of suitable candidates. Furthermore, all manner of corruption which now characterizes the electoral process will be eliminated, or at least reduced to the barest minimum, because the system will be dealing with smaller number as one goes to the apex of this pyramid-like structure.

Monarchical democracy

Pre-colonial Africa was replete with kingdoms that saw their demise during colonial invasion. In spite of this, kings and chiefs still have an important role in democratization in Africa. Under the traditional system of government, two main factors generally made it unthinkable and unfeasible for the Chief or king to impose his will on his people. First, his sacred duty as the link between man and the ancestors did not permit to oppress his people and expect the blessing or cooperation of his ancestral spirits. Second, any dictatorial tendency would bring shame to his lineage (Ayithey 1992).

This, arguably, is what kept the ethnic harmony between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi and Rwanda together under the rule of a *Mwami* (king). It was the Belgian colonial historiography in collaboration with early missionaries, and then multiparty democracy (1989, 1993) that polarized Burundian and Rwandan countries into fratricide and the consequent political carnage.

The stability, monarchical democracy brought, collapsed under the weight of Western liberal democracy. There is nothing wrong with some African countries following the footsteps of Morocco, Swaziland, and Lesotho. All the citizens need to do during constitutional conference is to strike a balance between a ceremonial kingship and highly decentralized modern expressions of a *bashingatabe* (inner council), *ligogo* (judiciary), and *lekgotla* (parliament). While kingship is attained by lineage, power at the base is through consociational means.

What stems from this sort of democratic model is the organic link between democracy and history, history as a process not history by analogy (Mamdani 1996). Not all African countries may go back completely to their pre-colonial starting point, but there may be a case for at least a particular retreat, a case for establishing contacts with familiar landmarks of yesteryears and then re-starting the journey of modernization under indigenous impetus (Mazrui 1986).

Conclusion: Nurturing and Consolidating Democracy in Africa

Once each country is able to establish a model of and public policy for Democracy, election malpractices may be minimized, political stability assured, and development guaranteed. For this to be attained, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- ❖ There is no particular or single model of democracy and so countries should be allowed to try homegrown ideologies not parachutist models. Unfortunately, some of these ideologies have been too short-lived to be scrupulously evaluated.
- ❖ Western Governments, multinational co operations and Breton Woods Institutions must exercise patience with African countries involved in innovative and alternative

models of democracy different from the neo-liberal concept.

- ❖ The African political leadership should understand that their citizens see democracy and election as a means to an end. Indeed the only democratic glue that holds society together is the deliverance of public goods. Sometimes elections do not fail, it is Governments that do; and when Governments do, there is voter apathy, electoral fatigue, and democratic disenchantment.
- ❖ Africa is in dire need of a strong civil society (Partners in democracy) which should include vibrant development media; people-oriented institutions, local bodies, youths/women organizations, intellectuals and others who even at their peril, must contribute to the creative and productive dimension of elections and democratization.
- ❖ The African people still need, either as nations or as a continent to freely sit in an *indaba*, a *tinkhundla*, a *lekgotla*, under a Palaver tree, or in a Sovereign National Conference to establish a public policy for democracy.
- ❖ Lastly, whatever public policy for democracy they choose, Africa must drink from the fountain of their indigenous democratic entitlement which focuses on human values (social justice/management, population participation), collective security, distributive wealth and mutual tolerance in a true fellow-feeling system.

Note

This essay appeared as a chapter in a book “Consolidating Democratic Governance and Quality management in Africa” CARAD 2003.

References

- Akintola.A. (1998) “Federalism and Democracy in Nigeria”, *West Africa Magazine* January 1995, p.69
- Ayittey.G.B.N (1992) *Africa Betrayed*. New york St Martins Press
- Bakary T. (1998) “Democracy in Africa.The post electoral era”, *CODESRIA Bulletin* nos 3 and 4 pp9-15

- Bangura, Y. (1998) *Democratisation, Equity and Stability*. UNRISD Discussion paper 93
- Burgsdoff, S (1992) Consociational democracy: a new concept for Africa. *The Courier*, no 134
- Davidson, B (1992) *The Blackman's Burden*, New York: Times Books
- International IDEA, (1996) *National Capacity-Building for Democracy*, Stockholm, February 12-14
- International IDEA, (1996) *Democracy Forum*, Stockholm, June 12-14
- Joseph, R (ed) (1978) *Gaullist Africa: Cameroun under Ahmadou Abidjo*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Mamdani, M (1996) *Citizen and subject Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton University Press
- Mazrui, A. (1996) *The Africans*, London: BBC Publications
- Mkandiwire, T. and C.Soludo, (1998) *Our Continent, Our future*, CODESRIA
- Ngwane, G. (1996) *Settling Disputes in Africa*, Yaounde: Buma Kor Publishers
- Ngwane, G. (2001) *Way forward for Africa*, Colorado: International Academic Publishers
- Ogbonna, N.C.B (1998) Plato's Republican Model. *West Africa Magazine*, January 19-25

Chapter Ten

The Military and African politics

The reasons for military interventions (militocracy) in Africa are as varied as they are complex. They range from personal grievances of civilian regimes to the political and economic kleptocracy of civilian regimes. In a struggle to cope with this predicament between the devil of tyranny (as in one-party system) and the deep blue sea of anarchy (as in multiparty systems) military rule has often been invoked. The balance sheet has largely been negative, with very few being benign, that is serving the interests of the people whether in a short or long political life span.

Soldiers as Power-Mongers

The 1960 civilian leadership in Africa was basically pan-African to the extent that some failed to cover enough ground in their own national territories. This gave leeway to soldiers as power-mongers. Among the prominent military take-overs in the 1960s were those in Congo (Kinshasa) in November 1965 by Colonel Joseph Desire Mobutu, and in the same year in Algeria by Colonel Houari Boumedienne; in Nigeria in January 1966 by Major Nzeogwu followed later by a counter-coup by Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi; a month later in Ghana by Colonel Akwasi Amankwaah Afrifa; in Togo in January 1967 by Lieutenant Colonel Etienne Gnassingbe Eyadema; in Mali in 1968 by Lieutenant Moussa Traore; and in Libya in September 1969 by Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi.

The symbol of benign militocracy in this epoch is Muammar Ghaddafi. He, with a small group of unknown young officers, overthrew the monarchy of king Idris I to establish a participatory democracy based on people's congresses and committees. Still the leader of Libya today, Ghaddafi has succeeded in wresting power from the former colonialists by exploiting Libyan wealth and putting it at the disposal of the citizens. The results are for anyone (not wearing neo-colonial blinkers) to see.

Soldiers as power-Brokers

The 1970-1980 civilian leadership in Africa was basically nationalist to the extent that it wanted to have a tyrannical grip on every facet of national life. Torn between the exigencies of “under the tree” rule and the pressure of Cold War politics, the leadership opened avenues for soldiers to step in as power-brokers. Prominent among the military coups in the 1970s were the experiences in Uganda in 1971 by Idi Amin Dada; in Ethiopia in 1974 by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, in Nigeria in July 1975 by General Muhammad Murtala; and in Ghana in 1979 by Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings. The most benign of these take-overs was that of Muhammad Murtala. General Murtala’s eight-month government gained a reputation for integrity and commitment to radical change and was welcomed by most Nigerians.

In the 1980s, there were take-overs in Liberia in April 1980 by Master-Sergeant K. Doe; in Ghana in 1981 once again by Rawlings; in Nigeria in 1983 by Major-General Buhari; and in 1986 by General Ibrahim Babaginda; in Burkina Faso in 1983 by Captain Thomas Sankara; in Guinea in 1984 by Colonel Lansana Conte; and in 1986 in Uganda by Yoweri Museveni.

The most spectacular of military rules in the 1980s was that of Captain Thomas Sankara. He instituted a nation in which all citizens participated in its development and brought the masses into political and economic decision-making. He lasted in power only four years.

Soldiers as power sharers

In spite of some of the positive records of some military rule, it has been observed that the military should stick to their legitimate places in the barracks. They should return to their roles as protectors of state security, not as custodians of political power. The people of Africa saw the one-party tyranny as a front for militocracy, and the only way the military could be excluded was through the national constitutional reforms. The 1990s were therefore years of national debate. That debate was to provide Africa with a democratic system which will enable it to aspire to a stable political and economic future. Unfortunately most African leaders refused to budge and where they did, it was for political convenience not conviction, and so the military rode on.

The 1990-2000 civilian leadership in Africa is basically globalist to the extent that it has yielded its power to international donors. The masses have watched how their independent gains have been pillaged by the 'axis of economic evil' (the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organisation); they have watched with pain their republican institutions turned into burdens of monarchy; they have watched in distress how their humble leaders have transformed themselves into demi-gods. The social democracy that the masses were advocating has become so neo-liberal that the only (dis) credit one can give multipartyism is having expanded both the economic and political space for a simpering elite (across the political divide). This simpering elite thrives on election manipulation, social exclusion and brazen corruption. If the masses were helpless, the soldiers thought they still could make contribution to national life.

Prominent among the military coups in the 1990s were Mali's 1991 coup by Ahmadou Toumani Toure; Nigeria's 1993 coup by General Sani Abacha; the 1997 coup in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) by Laurent Desire Kabila; and Sierra Leone's series of coups embodied by the late Foday Sankoh. The most benign of these was Ahmadou Toumani Toure who took power, installed a national conference, and the following year left the scene for civilian rule. That he came back in 2001 as elected leader is proof of his charisma and popularity.

Soldiers as statesmen

Africa has tried both the single party (where there was discipline without democracy) and multiparty system (where there is liberalization without discipline) but the military seldom remained in the barracks. National debates were deferred until the late 1990s. In 1999, Ghadafi-who thought the gains African countries had made during independence had all been lost back to the colonialists – called for a continental debate in Sirte. One of the main things to come out of Sirte debate was the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union. Among the 33 articles that were adopted in the African Union Treaty was Article 30: "Government which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the

activities of the Union.” Was the word ‘unconstitutional’ to mean just coming to power by the bullet?

In spite of this resolution, the wave of military coups continues even in twenty-first century Africa. The early years of the new century saw coups from Robert Guei followed by Guillaume Soro in Cote d’Ivoire, from Francois Bozize in Central African Republic, from Sekou Damateh Conneh in Liberia (although the transition was manned by a civilian businessman, Gyude Bryant), and General Verissimo Conneia Seabra in Guinea Bissau, with a transition that was also manned by a civilian businessman and from Ould Ahmed Taya of Mauritania.

From the utterances of these coup leaders, there seems to be a return to benign military. The coup leaders all established a short-term transition during which there was a national debate, national catharsis and national reconciliation.

Strangely most of the coup leaders enjoyed maximum co-operation not only from their citizens but recognition and support as well from regional bodies in the continent. The Central African organ, CEMAC, gave Bozize a red-carpet treatment after he ousted elected leader Ange Patasse, who sought political asylum first in Cameroon and then in Togo. The West African organ, ECOWAS, yielded to rebel pressure and presided over the departure of democratically elected Charles Taylor from Liberia. ECOWAS also negotiated the smooth resignation from power by Kumba Yaya in Guinea-Bissau to make way for a rebel-led agenda.

In the 1960s, coups were quickly and decisively condemned, but what is happening today that young Turks are given more prominence than opposition leaders? Is the African Union holding the tenets of the African Peer Review Mechanism more to its chest than Article 30 of its treaty? Should we not now agree with Antonio de Figueredo, Basil Davidson, Claude Ake, Thandika Mkadawire, Adebayo Olukoshi, Samir Amin, Kwesi Prah, Micere Mugo and other African revisionist scholars that Africa’s real political and development problem lies in copying the wrong borrowed Western models?

In presiding over transition periods, the twenty-first century military must move from being benign soldiers to visionary statesmen. Transition periods are not only meant to establish civilian election calendars. They are avenues of re-examining and

rethinking our models of democracy and development, which so far have served Western countries and their African lackeys in power. Transition governments have the advantage of practicing consensual democracy (no party ideology) and proposing home-grown development models. So what works for a transitional government can work for a permanent government.

Finally, militocracy, whether benign or malign, has no legal binding, it is not the people's best choice, but as long as democratic avenues are gagged by truncated elections and constitutional panel-beating and as long as civilian leadership in Africa thrives by grotesque routine instead of by grandiose reform, the military will remain the people's hidden choice.

Militocracy, whether benign or malign, is a dangerous trend, but as long as the weak civil society is pauperized and emasculated by civilian (mis)rule, they will be tempted to yield their voices to benign militocracy in the hope that the bloodless bullet will silence the fraudulent ballot and bring to national debate, the unanswered questions of what independence, democracy, citizenship, justice and economic empowerment mean to the people of Africa.

Note

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Conflict Trends magazine*
ACCORD (South Africa) Number 4/2003

Chapter Eleven

Deconstructing liberal Democracy in Africa

Liberal democracy is the system that relies on the dynamics of certain established stages in articulating its values and producing its actions. Some aspects of these stages, which are part of the process, include the production of a national constitution, the selection of candidates by political parties, the monitoring of the electoral process and freedom of assembly (Lumumba-Kasongo 2005:197). Last year marked the fifteenth anniversary of the institution of liberal democracy in more than 30 countries in Africa

While few countries have thrived through liberal democracy, several have ended up either as failed states, rogue states or even a “bunker praetorian state”. External desiderata on Africa’s economic leap still rely on pro-capitalist models of development that focus on market forces that subsume society’s interest. These models have further centralised power in the hands of the technocratic elites (Kohli 1997:73).

The African technocratic elites have been evasive of a democratic substance (economic development, social security, etc) in favour of a democratic form that emphasises mainly party formation, elections and constitutional engineering. No doubt that the last fifteen years have been characterised by procedural elections where financial weight is in billions of FCFA and outcome predictable.

For many political leaders, the holding of multiparty election is nothing but an alibi aimed at qualifying them for the benefits of benevolent globalisation (Cassen 2001). In fact, the concept of party formation under multiparty has not been a conduit to articulating the interest of the masses, but a source of primitive wealth accumulation (utility outcome) for politicians.

National constitutions that are supposed to be the glue of national cohesion have been personalised to perpetrate the tenacity syndrome of “occult” powercrats. This partly explains why within the last fifteen years alternative modes of deconstructing liberal democracy in Africa have been varied and complex, each with different results.

The underlying aim of this deconstruction process is to disempower the predatory elites, which use elections as instruments of control and the constitution as an object of manipulation. The goal has been to reconstruct a social tool for articulating a progressive functioning society for all, to reconnect the leaders with the led and to chart a veritable social contract beyond elections.

Some of these deconstructive modes include coalition building, constitutional amendments, popular mobilisation and benign militocracy. Coalition building occurs when parties (especially opposition) create alliances or partnership to dislodge the power of incumbency.

The parties tentatively overcome their ideological differences and personality bickering in order to capture the reins of state power. The demise of the “Parti Socialiste” in Senegal, which had been in power for close to 40 years was possible in 2000 when political weights like Abdoulaye Wade (Parti Democratique Senegalais), Idrissa Seck and Moustapha Niasse (Alliance des Forces du Progres) rallied under the “Sopi” (change) banner.

On December 27, 2002, the Kenya Africa National Union’s, KANU, 40-year supremacy came to a halt thanks to a coalition of 16 opposition parties under the National Rainbow Coalition, NARC, umbrella. That same NARC collapsed into yet another coalition building splinter groups called the Orange Democratic Movement.

Constitutional amendments continue to be carried out either to limit presidential tenure of office, devolve power to the regions, share power among the political class or separate power among the various institutions (executive, legislature, judiciary, civil society). Limiting the mandate of the president has become a popular means to check “the unique political culture of absolutism” that characterised the reigns of Jean Bedel Bokassa, Hastings Banda and Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Central African Empire, Malawi and former Zaire, respectively.

While this has succeeded in Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania, it is taking a frustrating volte-face in Uganda, Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Popular Mobilisation

Political racketeers in Africa keep scheming for this third term madness or the elastic elongation of Presidential mandates even for those presidents who have outlived their political usefulness. Popular mobilisation or people power that was the basis of independence struggles in the late 50s, and liberal democratic movements in the 90s came to the zenith in 1994 when Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa.

Since then, either as organised expansionary pressure groups (trade unions) or groundswell of grassroots movement (strikes), people power has become a permanent feature in the African political landscape.

Trade unions like the Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU, in South Africa, Nigeria Labour Congress and Ghana Trade Union Congress continue to force their governments to the negotiating tables on bread and butter issues.

A clear manifestation of popular mobilisation took place in October 2000 when Ivorians pushed out Robert Guei, who fraudulently proclaimed himself winner of the presidential elections in favour of Laurent Gbagbo. Ultimately, the success of people power lies largely on civil society actors like the media, church, traditional rulers and organic intellectuals.

Benign Militocracy

A militocracy or military intervention was thought, with the institution of liberal democracy, to be a thing of the past. In fact, Article 30 of the African Union treaty condemns it. Yet a resurgent phenomenon (after Sankara, Rawlings, Murtala Mohamed, Ahladji Toumani Toure) called benign militocracy seems to be making its appearance once more.

On March 15, 2003, General Francois Bozize of Central African Republic ousted the democratically elected regime of Ange Felix Patasse before “civilianising” himself as President in 2005. Faure Gnassingbe of Togo benefited from a military apparatchik to foist himself President only 24 hours after his father’s (Gnassingbe Eyadema) death in February 2005 before “legitimising himself as president a few months later (May 2005). The African Union was stunned by the jubilation that greeted the military junta in

Mauritania when it took over power from the 20-year misrule of Ould Ahmed Taya on August 3, 2005.

Liberal democracy gave us the feeling that opposition parties provided the alternative voices, but instead warlords or rebel movements (the case of Ivory Coast) and benign militocracy seem to be walking where opposition parties fear to tread. The *sine qua non* condition for a better functioning multipartyism and democracy is that the state has to provide social security, improve the standards of living and provide advancement of all. (Lumumba-Kasongo 2002:2).

As Julius Nyerere put it 'to advocate a strong state is to advocate a state, which among other things, has power to act on behalf of the people in accordance with their wishes' (Nyerere 1993:3). What all of these show is that liberal democracy is clearly not thriving and it is by no means clear whether we should be celebrating the triumph of democracy or lamenting its demise (Ake 1997:3).

The survival mentality of the political class (both incumbent and opposition) and the traumatic effects of multinational interest are so entrenched in Africa's body politic that it will need a revolutionary legitimacy of democracy to reallocate ownership and resources to the African masses.

In this vein, the rise of expansionary pressures and emancipatory movements as well as the nurturing of a young visionary leadership may as well be the antidote to Africa's fifteen years of truncated Hobbesian democracy. Beyond the discourse of Afrocentrism and the "scar on the conscience of the world" metaphor, Africans need an inward-looking critique to invent a real democracy that strikes a chord with the upliftment of the masses strapped in penury and despair.

The African Union would need to be inspired by the faith of a continental government and a common citizenship instead of being frightened by the fears of regional destabilisation and annexationist appetite. At a time African's human capital (the youth) is letting gruesome immigration adventures to become its window of opportunities 2006 should be more the entry point of continental empathy and catharsis.

As I see it, 2006 and the decade that follows bears the tell tale signs of a generational change in leadership and a paradigm shift in vision.

Note

This essay appeared in *The Post* newspaper, January 16, 2006

Chapter Twelve

Benin: From Liberal to Social Democracy

Benin is undeniably one of Africa's most successful stories in liberal or electoral democracy. From 1990 when she became the first African country to institute a sovereign National Conference, Benin has continued to employ all innovative and endogenous democratic strategies that distinguish her from the continent's identity of political insolvability. The solid foundation laid by the conference in February 1990 provided the Beninese people with a nationalistic vision that focused on the power of alternatives through the ballot box rather than the principle of self-perpetration through constitutional tinkering.

As it was with most African countries, the clamor for democracy in the late 80s and early 90s was translated by the political elite and "development partners" as a movement from one party tyranny to a liberal, multiparty or electoral democracy. Yet in most cases it turned out that liberal democracy was more of elite competition than mass mobilization, more of concession than conversion, more of convenience than conviction. It was not so with Benin which now stands as Africa's model of "glasnost" and "perestroika".

The success story

Benin's success in liberal democracy has been influenced by a number of factors. Firstly, the existence of a vibrant press. According to a recent annual report on press freedom, Benin not only tops all African countries but stands ahead of countries like America, Japan and Italy. Press freedom has been used to effectively and constructively manage debate and contradictions in Benin's body-politic.

Secondly, the creation of an autonomous elections management body called Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome (CENA). CENA is not only independent in its constitutional make-up but is managed by persons of integrity whose sole loyalty lies with the aspirations of the people and not the whims and caprices of the political class. A case in point was in March 1996 when the then incumbent President Nicéphore Soglo

tried in vain to arm twist the then iron lady President of CENA into rigging elections in his favour. Because of the neutrality, impartiality, transparency and stability of CENA, Benin broke the 18 year (1972-1990) Marxist rule of Ahmed Mathieu Kerekou and further heralded a ping-pong leadership pendulum for another 15 years (1991-2006) between the flamboyant World Bank diplomat Nicephore Soglo and the home grown political “chameleon” Mathieu Kerekou. It was also because of the transparency of the 2006 Presidential polls that the loser Adrien Houngbedji sent a message of congratulation to the winner Yayi Boni.

Thirdly, the respect of the constitution. While other African countries adopted the second term mandate as a check to power routinisation, Benin added the exit age factor (Presidential candidate should not be above 70 years) as an antidote to the vexed tenacity syndrome in Africa. Herein lies the maturity and statesmanship of Mathieu Kerekou who instead of violating that constitutional provision chose to act as the political umpire. Even when it came to postponing the run-off elections (another important factor) between Yayi Boni and Houngbedji, Kerekou insisted on respecting the constitution which stipulates that all run-offs must take place two weeks after the first one.

Lastly, the resolve and determination of the Beninese to collectively take their destiny into their hands through the ballot box. The Beninois people have for the last fifteen years shown that the ballot box could be both a form of resistance and an alternative framework for reconstruction. Through the ballot box, the Beninois people have rejected the stale stench of sloganeering and are perpetually in search of the potent perfume of performance.

Yayi's enigmatic rise

The overwhelming victory of Dr. Thomas Yayi Boni as Benin's new President marks the climax of the liberal democratic entitlement inherent in the people of Benin and the challenges needed to use this yeast of liberal democracy to bake the bread of social democracy.

And here again one is compelled to explain the enigmatic rise of a relative new comer to the limelight of power in Benin. Yayi's personal charisma and charm appealed to the electorate. Simple, accessible, cultivated, polite and youthful, Yayi came across

as a grassroots democrat and a man of principles. His economic career (he holds a Doctorate degree in Economics and was Economic Adviser to President Soglo between 1991-1996) must have influenced the electorate into believing that the era of political folklore should give way to economic development. Benin has not been spared of the nefarious effects of globalisation, privatisation, structural adjustment programs and sooner than later the bird flu economic sabotage. To quote Charles Soludo and Thandika Mkandawire, a major irony of African development history is that the theories and models employed have largely come from outside the continent.

In spite of a 5 per cent economic growth, pauperisation, unemployment, inflation, generalised poverty and corruption have had a toll on Benin life. Like other African countries, Benin's economy has been hemorrhaged by, to quote Frantz Fanon, 'a little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster only too glad to accept dividends and yet incapable of inventiveness.' The continent's economy, apart from being externally dependent and therefore dispossessed, has been left in the hands of a comprador bourgeoisie whose typical characteristic according to Professor Issa Shivji is "conspicuous consumption at home, a little investment in unproductive activities to make quick profits, and a lot of stashing of funds in foreign bank accounts".

As an economist Yayi has the task of inviting all Beninese to charting a homegrown long term economic program like Botswana's 2016 Vision and Zambia's 2030 Economic programme. Benin's agricultural potentials especially cotton and oil palm have not been fully exploited to meet the needs of a human-centred and people-driven development. As it was with the early nationalistic economic theologies, the state must recapture and reassert its development role and provide the basic needs of the population.

The fact that Yayi Boni was elected as an Independent candidate rather than a party candidate speaks volumes of the new trend towards meritocracy in African politics. Like Ahmadou Toumani Toure who was voted president of Mali in 2000 as an Independent, like Charles Konan Banny who was chosen as Prime Minister of the Ivorian crisis as an Independent, like in Ethiopia where the ceremonial President is constitutionally expected to be non-partisan and elected from among the Independent members of

the House, like in Swaziland where all the 30 members of the Senate are constitutionally required to be Independent and non-partisan, like the non-party ideology propounded by Yuweri Museveni which brought economic prosperity and political stability to Ugandans between 1986-2006, like in the former West and East Cameroon states where Independents could run for legislative elections, Yayi's victory rubbishes the monopoly and immunity party militants enjoy even when the parties have become ideologically bankrupt or its leaders have, to quote Frantz Fanon, "become senile before they know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth."

Youth appeal also played a crucial role in Yayi's election victory. With leaders like Jakaya Kikwete (55 years old) of Tanzania, Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi and Yayi Boni (54 years) of Benin, generational politics will remain a major political issue in Africa; an issue which according to Professor Jonathan Moyo (who himself ran and won as Independent in the 2005 Parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe) has gone unnoticed, ignored or unanalysed by Opinion Makers. But the truth is that the old guard nationalists in Africa are increasingly finding themselves out of step with the younger population.

Lastly Yayi Boni's sub regional professional experience played in his favour. As former Governor of the West African Development Bank, Yayi must be familiar with the strides West Africa has been making towards sub regional integration. For a country that is hemmed by other economic ambitious countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo and Niger, Benin's role as a pivotal state cannot be underestimated. Yayi has already promised to make Benin's relationship with Nigeria as fruitful as the yester relation of France and Germany. This will mean ironing out border problems based on harassments and smuggling to avoid border closures by Nigeria. Yayi's sub regional experience also compels him to join the progressive forces of the African Union who are painstakingly pursuing Kwame Nkrumah's vision and Muammar ALGathafi's agenda for a United Africa.

Conclusion

Benin has successfully braved the odds of liberal democracy; it now has the arduous task of delivering the dividends of such democracy

in the form of social democracy. Yayi is definitely aware of the euphoria that greeted Presidents Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal in 2000 and Mwai Kibaki of Kenya in 2002 and the disillusionment that now seems to follow it. Yayi is aware that the ultimate goal of any democracy is to improve the quality of lives of its people. Indeed, according to Lumumba Kasongo, democracy is both a process and a practice that involves equal economic and social opportunities for the citizenry. It is a corrective process in which a given society is born again. It is a ritual processing of new ideas and policies in a given society. If Dr Thomas Yayi Boni fails to reconcile Benin's liberal democracy success story with her social democracy expectations, the Beninese people would come 2011, jettison his departure in the same manner they facilitated his arrival.

Notes

This essay appeared in *The African Nation newspaper* (America), August 2006. The essay was used as starting point for a tele interview between a group of young American media students called "ypress" and the author on the state and future of democracy in Africa. The interview was done by telephone in September 2006.

Chapter Thirteen

A Memorandum to the President of the Republic of Cameroon

Subject: *Participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral Process in Cameroon*

Submitted by: *Committee for the Participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral Process in Cameroon.*

Introduction

His Excellency
The President of the Republic of Cameroon

O.OI. At your invitation, a team of Commonwealth Experts (including an Expert from Francophone Africa) met from the 20 - 22 February 2006, with the Ministerial Committee designated by you to examine modalities for the establishment of an Independent Election Management Body in Cameroon. The meeting agreed to proceed on the basis of your vision relating to the establishment of a new and Independent Election Management Body with responsibility for the entire election management process in Cameroon.

The Cameroonian side expressed its desire to pursue further consultations in a number of other countries with a view to conducting a comparative study of the terms and conditions of functioning of Independent Election Management Institutions. With an Independent Election Managements Body in Cameroon, there would obviously be the need for a new Electoral code in Cameroon.

It is in this regard that we, concerned citizens, united under the platform of *Committee for the participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral process in Cameroon* are submitting this memorandum to you with a view that Independent candidates be allowed to participate in the 2007 Municipal and Legislative Elections and conditions for the participation of Independent candidates at Presidential Elections be reviewed.

1. Background

1.01. Between 1945 – 1966, individuals stood as Independents for elections in Cameroon in both what was then West and East Cameroon. Infact the case for Independent candidates was justified by the then Prime Minister of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo in his address to the 4th United Nations General Assembly on 25th February 1959. He had this to say:

Alongside political parties could and should exist a public opinion; this public opinion could place confidence in men it appreciates for their know-how, their competence, and their human qualities. What is more normal, more in conformity with democratic traditions than this confidence of the voter for the elected. This democratic usage is in any case in conformity with the profound traditions of the Cameroonian people. Will we want Cameroon to blindly copy the political system in other countries by putting its destiny entirely on political parties, or rather in a single party?

1.02. The development of the electoral system in the then Francophone Cameroon could be divided into two phases: the period of colonial democracy stretching from 1946 – 1960, and the period of post – Independent multi-party democracy stretching between 1960 and 1966.

Article 5 of Law No 46 – 2151 of 5 October 1946 related to the election of members of the National Assembly for instance stipulated that:

“Candidates of a list in an electoral district are expected to make a declaration accompanied by their legalized signatures. These declarations of candidates should indicate the name of the list presented”

So, the 1946 though based on a list system was non-partisan.

Under Ordinance No. 60 – 21 of 4 March 1960 on elections into the National Assembly, which governed the April 1960 Legislative elections, the participation of Independent candidates in the electoral process was maintained.

1.03: The electoral system in the former Southern Cameroons between 1946 and 1961 was regulated by legal instruments, which made running as Independent highly permissive. For example Article 46 of the Electoral Regulations of 17 May 1951 favoured the

participation of Independent candidates, with simple conditions like providing:

- (a) The name, address and description of the candidate;
- (b) The name, address and description of the nominators of the candidates;
- (c) Statements by the candidates that they were willing and qualified to stand for election; and
- (d) Deposit of 10 pounds to be returned if nomination is withdrawn, as election not contested, or if contested, they obtain more than one-tenth of the total votes.

1.04. The timid introduction of partisan politics in Cameroon between 1962 and 1966 went almost unnoticed. The main reason being that the laws between West and East Cameroon were not harmonized. For instance, the law on partisan politics was prescribed for Presidential elections in 1962, made optional for Federal legislative elections and made compulsory for Legislative elections only in 1964.

1.05. With the coming of the one party system in 1966, the electoral laws were harmonized, and law No. 66/LF/17 of 21st December 1966 for elections into West Cameroon House of Assembly was enacted, which was similar to that of Law No 65/LF/1 of 28th April 1965 for the East Cameroon House of Assembly. In this regard between 1967 and 1982, there was no room for the exercise of political independence in Cameroon and the participation of Independent candidates in the electoral process was proscribed by various legal instruments regulating the various elections.

11. Independent Candidate participation in the New Deal Multi-party Democracy: 1990 – 2004

11.01. Since 1990, your New Deal multiparty democracy has practised a complete partisan system but a partial Independent candidate system where by the various electoral laws recognized the eligibility of Independent Candidates to run for Presidential elections but not for Legislative and Municipal elections.

11.02. With regard to Presidential elections, Law No. 92/010 of 7 September 1992 fixing conditions to fill vacancies in the Presidency

of the Republic in its Articles 55 and 57 stipulates that nominations for Presidential elections could either be by political parties or independent candidates.

11.03. However, the controversial condition for Independent candidates to participate in Presidential elections is that *such a candidate must produce 300 legalised signatures from the electoral college (voters) who should be members of the National Assembly, Consular Chambers, Councilors, and First class Chiefs (special high profile voters) from all the Provinces, making 30 per Province.*

11.04. Between 1992 and 2004, there have been three Presidential elections. First was the October 1992 Presidential Election in which all the candidates were sponsored by recognised political parties. There was no Independent candidate.

11.05. The first attempt at Independent candidate participation in the New Deal multiparty Democracy was in the 1997 Presidential election which saw the Yaounde – based lawyer Onana Nouma Marcus depositing his candidature to contest as an Independent. His candidature was disqualified on the basis that he could not produce 300 signatures from the 10 Provinces.

11.06. The second attempt at Independent candidature was in the 2004 Presidential election in which six candidates deposited their files as Independents. All six candidates were disqualified for various reasons among which were the inability to furnish 300 signatures from the 10 provinces.

11.1. Constraints of the 300 signature condition

111.01. We of the *Committee for the Participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral process in Cameroon* are of the opinion that the 300 signature condition is:

(a) Discriminatory, in the light of the constitution which determines the fundamental rules with regards to elections.

(b) Unrealistic, considering the prevailing situation in Cameroon where some Provinces cannot produce 30 of such “special high profile voters”,

(c) Unconvincing, because none of these “special high profile voters” is Independent enough to endorse an Independent candidate. Almost all of them are members of parties who would rather maintain party discipline or toe party line.

IV. Other Experiences elsewhere

IV.01. For more than forty years of political Independence and democratic transitions in Africa, candidate-based electoral processes have been experimented with remarkable successes. Let us make mention of a few, in recent times:

- (a) In Cote d'Ivoire, the municipal election of 25 March 2001 saw 38 of the 195 local councils being grabbed by Independents. Independents were now recognised as the third political force in the country. In 2000, Rwandese local government election was candidate-based.
- (b) Since 1990, Independent candidates have run and won legislative elections in countries like Mauritania, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Mauritius, Ghana, Algeria, Congo Republic, Madagascar, etc.
- (c) In the September – October 1993 legislative election in the Kingdom of Swaziland, all the 30 members of the Senate were elected as Independents.
- (d) The most conspicuous practice of Independent candidature in Africa was the ‘no party democracy movement’ in Uganda where between 1986 – 2006, legislative and municipal elections were conducted essentially through Independent candidates.
- (e) Independents have also made an impact in some Presidential elections in Africa between 1990 – 2006. Independents have run in countries like Algeria, 1999) Cote d'Ivoire (2000), Guinea Bissau (2000), Senegal (2000), Sudan (2000) Cape Verde (2001) Sao Tome (2001), Zimbabwe (2002 and 2005), Mauritania (2003).

Independents have won Presidential elections in some African countries for example Marc Ravalomanana who swept 51.5 per cent of the votes during the 16 December 2001 in Madagascar; Ahmadou Toumani Toure who won 64.4 per cent of the votes

during the April – May 2002 Presidential elections in Mali; and quite recently the spectacular victory of Yayi Boni who won 74.51 per cent of the votes during the March 2006 Presidential elections in Benin.

- (f) In Ethiopia, Parliament passed Proclamation 255/94 in 2001 stipulating that only Independent, non-partisan Parliamentarians are eligible for election to the position of President of the Republic.

IV.02. We are happy to note that four of the African countries that have been included in the Commonwealth Delegation to make reforms in our Electoral process are still experimenting the Independent candidature system. We are confident that these four countries (Benin, Mauritius, Kenya and South Africa) will draw from their experiences to propose a more humane and realistic *modus operandi* for the participation of Independents in elections in Cameroon.

V. 10 Reasons for Independent Candidate participation in Elections in Cameroon

(i) Article 2.1 of the 18 January 1996 Constitution prescribes that “*National Sovereignty shall be vested in the people of Cameroon (...) no section of the people shall arrogate to itself the exercise thereof*”.

Making eligibility for election conditional only to membership in political parties is excluding a great section of the people since political parties represent only a section of the people.

(ii) Article 2.2 of the 1996 Constitution stipulates “*the authorities responsible for the management of the state shall derive powers from the people through elections*”.

People can organize themselves as parties or Independents since parties are only one of the ways through which universal suffrage can be expressed. To reduce elections merely through parties is to penalise citizens who do not belong to political parties.

- (iii) Part II, chapter 1, Article 5.5 of the 1996 constitution says “*Candidates for the office of President of the Republic must be Cameroonians by birth*”

Article 20.3 says Candidates for the post of Senator and personalities appointed for the post of a senator by the President of the Republic...(…)...., In both cases the word “Candidate” is not specific to party candidates; it could therefore be extended to cover Independent candidates. Moreover, the same constitution through Article 48.2 reads “*Any challenges in respect of the regularity of one of the elections (...) may be brought before the Constitutional Council by any candidate, political party that participated in the election in the constituency concerned*”.

It is therefore clear that the 18th January 1996 constitution is Independent candidate – friendly. The real problem lies with an Electoral code (Law) that should provide humane and realistic conditions for the participation of Independent candidates in elections in Cameroon as from 2007.

(iv) The OAU during its 38th session in Durban on 8th July 2002 resolved that:

- Individuals and political parties shall have the right to freedom of movement to campaign and to express political opinions with full access and information within the limits of the laws of the land.
- Every individual and political party participating in elections shall recognize the authority of the Electoral Commission.

The emphasis here is on the two carefully separated words of “individuals” and “political parties”

(v) Article 21(1) of the United Nation Declaration on Human Rights states that “*everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives*”.

These representatives can therefore be chosen either through party-centered electoral system or through candidate-based electoral system or both.

(vi) A candidate – based electoral system would enhance competition and expand the democratic space that is already being narrowed by party-centered system in Cameroon.

(vii) In addition to a party – based system, a candidate – centered election would permit the electorate to focus on individual merit and independent philosophical or political opinions.

(viii) Independent Candidature would act as a buffer to party candidates who, out of their veiled personal interest or contradictory party ideology are obliged to defect from one party to another.

(ix) So far party – centered elections have only favoured an old generation that has monopolized the political arena in Cameroon. Independent candidature would therefore provide the young generation with the opportunity of bringing a new vision and fresh agenda to the body-politic of our country. Indeed Independent candidature is now regarded as an antidote to gerontocratic politics and a rite of passage to generational democracy.

(x) Through Independent Candidate participation, the process of building a consociational democracy based on power – sharing not only among political parties, regions and ethnic groups, but also between the state society and the civil society will be enhanced.

Conclusion

His Excellency

The President of the Republic

C.01. In the light of the foregoing, we the under mentioned members of the *Committee for the participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral process in Cameroon*, urge the Commonwealth Expert Team, the High Level Ministerial Committee on Cameroon Electoral Reform as well as all patriotic Cameroonians and development partners concerned with our democratic process and electoral code to positively consider our request for:

(a) The nullifying of the 300 signature condition that obtains for Independent candidates wishing to stand for Presidential election,

(b) The participation of Independent candidates at both the legislative and municipal elections as from 2007.

Buea, 25 May 2006

Mwalimu George Ngwane, Spokesperson of the Committee

Members of the Committee

- Mwalimu George Ngwane: Writer/ Executive Director, AFRICaphonie, Buea
- Churchill Ewumbue – Monono: Writer/Director , The Center for Research on Democracy and Development in Africa (CEREDDA), Buea
- Barrister Chief Charles F.A Taku: Lead Counsel, United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (UNICTR), Arusha -Tanzania
- Dr. Bate Besong: Poet, Playwright, President PEN Buea chapter, Cameroon.
- Simon Nkwenti: Secretary General Cameroon Teachers' Trade Union (CATTU), Bamenda.
- Martin Fon Yembe: Director, Global Information Network, Bamenda
- Aloysius Ntemfac Ofegbe: Journalist/
- Barrister Agbor Felix Nkongho Esq, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, - United States of America
- Dr. Kinni Yen Kinni, Curator, Afhemi Museum, Yaounde.
- Barrister Joseph Mbi Tanyi Esq, Director of Legal Aid/literacy, Buea
- Dibussi Tande, Resource Person/Political Consultant, United States of America

CONTACT ADDRESS

Tel No: 237 77 66 84 79

E-mail: Independentcand@yahoo.com

Box: 364, Buea, South West Province, Cameroon.

C.C:

- The Right Honourable Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada representing the Commonwealth in Cameroon's Electoral Reform Committee,

- His Excellency Jean Marie Atangana Mebara, Minister of State, Secretary – General of the Presidency/representing the Government of Cameroon in Cameroon’s Electoral Reform Committee,
- His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konare, President of African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,
- H.E. The President of the National Assembly, Cameroon
- His Excellency Minister of state for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, Cameroon,
- His Excellency Minister of Communication, Cameroon.
- Samuel Mutua Kivuitu, Chairman of Electoral Commission of Kenya and Member of the Commonwealth Team;
- H.E. the Ambassador, United States Embassy, Cameroon,
- H.E British High Commissioner, British High Commission, Cameroon
- H.E French Ambassador, Cameroon
- H.E South African High Commissioner, Cameroon
- The President, Cameroon Bar Council
- The President, National Elections Observatory, Cameroon

Notes

This memorandum appeared either in its entirety or as a commentary in *Eden newspaper* of June 7 2006; in *The Heron newspaper* of June 8-15 2006; in *The Post newspaper* of June 9 2006; in *The Herald newspaper* of 5-6 June 2006; in the *Weekly Post* of July 6-12 2006; in *The Entrepreneur newspaper* of July-August 2006 and *The Post newsmagazine* of September 2006.

The French version of the memorandum was carried in *Le Messenger newspaper* of 8 Juin 2006 and *Mutations newspaper* of 13 Juin 2006.

Chapter Fourteen

The Opposition and their performance of electoral power in Cameroon (1992 – 2007)

Introduction

The return to multiparty politics in Cameroon in 1990 was met with reluctance and resistance by the regime. Triggered by the events of 26th May 1990, that led to the defiant launching of an Opposition party (Social Democratic Front – SDF), multipartyism and eventually Opposition parties became institutionalized following the Law of Association of 19th December 1990 (Law No. 90/056). In spite of this reform to accommodate multipartyism, the main kernel of democratic transition to put enabling structures in place evaded the political establishment in Cameroon. Unlike other African Countries like Benin (1990), Mali (1991), Zaire now Democratic Republic of Congo (1991) and South Africa (1994) that planned a democratic transition, the leadership of Cameroon resisted, then reluctantly gave in to a form of transition whose outcome fell below general expectations. Such a context only encouraged the emergence of a new elite in the political arena, next to the old ones who switched over for the occasion, to the virtues of political pluralism (Tidjani Alou 2002: 28). The setting up of Constitutional Conferences, Sovereign National Conferences and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as modes of transition was meant to provide new political and economic paradigms suited to the demands of pluralism. As discussion forums, transition modes served as the balm of national reconciliation and catharsis as well as avenues to put in place reforms and structures that will change the qualities of lives of the masses.

When President Paul Biya therefore declared on 27th June 1991 at the National Assembly that “*Je l’ai dit et je le maintiens, la conférence nationale est sans objet pour le Cameroun* (I insist that the National Conference is baseless in Cameroon), Cameroonians were stunned into rage and revolt.

Biya’s refusal to yield to popular demand for a national conference was partly due to the opposition parties’ misconception of the purpose of such a conference. Their perception was not one of overhauling the obsolete monolithic apparatus but one of

impeaching and eventually stripping Biya of legitimate power. Cameroonians therefore missed a rare opportunity to reassess the gains of independence and to examine the expectations of a democratic renewal. What they (Cameroonians) instead got was a Tripartite Conference consisting of the ruling party, the opposition and the civil society. This conference that was held from 30 October – 18th November 1991 proved to be futile as national aspirations became mortgaged on the altar of parochialism. The main weakness of this conference was the quasi-obsessional temptations of the ruling party, which wanted rules and results for its prime benefit alone.

So without any concrete rules on the exigencies of multiparty politics, without a change of the monolithic constitution, without a defined role of the opposition and without a clear cut line between the party and state, Cameroon set forth on the journey of electoral democracy (Ngwane 1996. 175).

This paper seeks to assess the impact of electoral democracy so far especially in terms of the performance of the Opposition between 1992 to 2007, evaluate the internal shortcomings of Opposition parties and make a projection of a vibrant democratic space that will go beyond routine elections to speak to the issues preoccupying the Cameroonian masses.

Elections Database

1) PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

a) 1st March 1992

Registered Voters	4.019.562
Total Votes	2.435.443
Voter Turn out	(60.6 per cent)
Invalid /Blank Votes	238.200
Total Valid votes	2.197.243

Party	Number of seats
Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM)	88
National Union For Democracy and Progress (UNDP)	68
Movement of the Defense of the Republic (MDR)	18
Union of Cameroon Populations (UPC)	06

Two opposite parties, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC), boycotted the poll.

b) 17 May 1997

Registered Voters	4.000.000 (approx)
Total Votes	Not Available (N/A)
Voter turnout	Not Available (N/A)

Party	Number of seats
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)	109
Social Democratic Front (SDF)	43
National Union For Democracy and Progress (UNDP)	13
Union of Cameroon Populations (UPC)	05
Movement of the Defense of the Republic (MDR)	01
Union of Cameroon Populations (UPC)	01
Liberty Movement of the Cameroon Youth (MLJC)	01
Vacant	07

The Supreme Court cancelled the election results in seven constituencies due to serious irregularities. On 3 August 1997 further conducted to fill the vacant seats. The RDPC won all of the seats, thus increasing its level of representation in the national assembly

c) 30th June 2002

Registered Voters	Not Available (N/A)
Total Votes	Not Available (N/A)
Voter Turnout	Not Available (N/A)

Party	Number of seats
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement	149
Social Democratic Front (SDF)	22
Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC)	05
Union of Cameroon Populations (UPC)	03
National Union For Democracy and Progress (UNDP)	01

The Supreme Court nullified the result for 17 seats on account of various irregularities. By-elections were held on 15 September to fill the vacant seats.

d) 22 July 2007

Registered Voters	5.000.000
(aprox)	
Total Voters /Voter Turnout	not Available

Party	Number of seats
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement	140
Social Democratic Front (SDF)	14
Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC)	04
National Union For Democracy and Progress (UNDP)	04
Progressive movement (MP)	01
Vacant	17

The Supreme Court nullified the result in five districts (affecting a total of 17 seats) on account of various irregularities. By-elections to be held on 30th September to fill the vacant seats.

2 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

a) 11th October 1992

Registered Voters	4.195.687
Total Votes	3.015.440
Voter Turnout	71.9 per cent

Party	per cent of Votes
Paul Biya (CPDM)	39.98 per cent
John Fru Ndi (SDF)	35.97 per cent
Bello Bouba Maigari (UNDP)	19.22 per cent
Adamou Ndam Njoya (UDC)	3.62 per cent

b) 12 October 1997

Registered Voters	Note Available
Total Votes	Not Available
Voters Turnout	81.4per cent
Invalid/Blank Votes	Not Available

Total Valid Votes	3.422.055	
Candidate (party)	Number of votes	per cent of votes
Paul Biya (CPDM)	3.167.820	92.57 per cent
Henri Hogbe Nlend (UPC)	85.693	2.50 per cent
Samuel Eboua (MDP)	83.506	2.44 per cent
Albert Dzongang (PPD)	40.814	1.19 per cent
Joachim Tabi Owono (AMEC)	15.817	0.46 per cent
Antoine N'Denabbu (RDPF)	15.490	0.45 per cent
Gustave Essaka (DIC)	12.915	0.38 per cent

The election was boycotted by three main opposition parties – the Social Democratic Front (SDF), National Union for Democratic Progress (UNDP, Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC) and a small Party, The Union of African Population (UPA)

c) 11 October 2004

Registered Voters	4.657.748
Total Votes	3.830.272
Voters Turnout	82.2 per cent
Invalid/Blank Votes	72.051
Total Valid Votes	3.758.221

Candidates (party)	Number of votes	per cent of votes
Paul Biya (CPDM)	2.665.359	70.92 per cent
John Fru Ndi (SDF)	654.066	17.40
Adamou Ndam Njoya (UDC)	168.318	4.48
Garga Haman Adjii (ADD)	140.372	3.74
Justice Mouafo (NPC – BUSH)	14.915	0.40
Yondo Mandengue Black (MNSD)	13.601	0.36
Ancient Ekane (MANIDEM)	13.290	0.35
Fritz Pierre Ngo (MEC)	13.122	0.35
Jean Michel Tekam	12.785	0.34
Victorin Hameni Bieleu (UFDC)	11.920	0.32
Boniface Forbin (JDP)	10.542	0.28
Djeukam Tchameni (MDI)	10.539	.028
Jean-Jacques Ekindi (MP)	10.158	0.27
Hubert Kamgang (UPA)	7.508	0.20
George Dobgima Nyamndi (SLC)	6.730	0.18

Analysis

Statistics show that in 1992, Opposition parties put together won 92 seats as opposed to 88 for the ruling party giving the opposition a 51.1 per cent in Parliament. From the face of it, this would have given the Opposition a strong weapon to initiate reforms through the Assembly but for the fact that one of the Opposition parties (Movement for the Defense of the Republic) decided to form a coalition with the Ruling party. That kept the opposition in a minority status in the National Assembly.

In 1997, the Opposition had 64 seats of the 180 scoring a 35.5 per cent.

In 2002 the Opposition had (before the rerun for 17seats nullified by the Supreme Court) 31 seats of the 180 scoring a 17.2 per cent.

In 2007 (pending results of the rerun for 17seats nullified by the Supreme Court) the Opposition had 23 seats scoring a percentage of 12.7 per cent.

So up from **51.1 per cent in 1992**, the Opposition has plummeted in Parliamentary configuration to **17.2 per cent in 2007**.

With regards to Presidential elections, the Opposition put together obtained a 58.81 per cent as opposed to 39.98 per cent for the ruling party of President Paul Biya in 1992. Therefore, were the Opposition parties to present a single candidate, they would have won the Presidential elections of 1992. Nonetheless the election results were shrouded in controversy with other sources giving opposition party (SDF) leader (Fru Ndi) 37 per cent and ruling party (CPDM) 36 per cent.

So the fragmentation of the Opposition flawed electoral system and lack of a run-off electoral procedure deprived the Opposition from winning the first multiparty Presidential elections in Cameroon in 1992.

In 1997, the Opposition put together scored a dismal percentage of 7.42 as opposed to 92.57 per cent for the ruling party. Part of the reason for this ridiculous performance by the Opposition was the boycott of these elections by three main

Opposition parties (Social Democratic Front, National Union for Democratic Progress and the Cameroon Democratic Union.)

In 2004 the Opposition put together scored 29per cent as opposed to 70.92per cent by the Ruling party.

So from a **58.81 per cent** score sheet in Presidential elections in 1992, Opposition put together waned in its performance by half scoring **29 per cent** in 2004.

Therefore for both Parliamentary and Presidential elections since 1992, the Opposition has shown a steady decline.

Categories of Opposition parties

The circumstances that led to the emergence of Opposition parties in Cameroon were predicated on the twin phenomena of challenge and change. Challenge was based on the need for the establishment to reform itself and give access to alternative voices while change was the political agenda that meant to reverse the ruling oligarchy in favour of a new dispensation (regime change).

Initially like in most African countries, the resurgence of multipartyism in Cameroon was borne out of the hunger for change hence the liberation theology preached by most Opposition parties became the democratic mantra.

In Cameroon the slogan “*Biya must go*” was used by Opposition parties as a template for grabbing power. But even the most radical of the Opposition failed to go beyond what Celestin Monga has termed “slogans in line with populist; illusions”. In other words, transforming the liberation theology into a structural ideological philosophy became a problematic among Opposition parties

Since the quest for political pluralism is reduced to multipartyism, Opposition parties are expected to be distinct from and autonomous of the ruling party (Olukoshi, 1998:19). With no clear constitutional provision on the status of Opposition parties in Cameroon (unlike a country like Mozambique where the Opposition is treated as a government in waiting) Opposition parties in Cameroon have through various electoral processes given themselves a political identity.

a) The Opposition of liberation

It is the SDF approach that focuses on a zero-sum arrangement. Referred to as “external” opposition by Tangie Fonchingong, this category of Opposition is formed outside the ruling constellation and often within the background of deep-seated disagreement, conflict and protest. It sees itself as a symbol of change and fights to the end for a radically alternative system (Tangie 1998:125). Its political mindset is based on “*Biya must go*” strategy.

(b) The Opposition of cooptation

It is characterized by the desire to share power and the prebends or spoils of power with the ruling party. Attracted by the obnoxious notion of broad based governance or government of national unity, this category of Opposition poses no fundamental challenge to the regime. It shores up the regime and seeks mainly to ensure its own share of the spoils rather than presenting radically different proposals. (Tangie 1998:125). The mind-set of such opposition is based on a win-win situation. All through the electoral process in Cameroon, the NUDP, MDR, MLJC and UPC (which in 1948 was the only Opposition of liberation in Cameroon) are Opposition parties that are of this nomenclature. Its political paradigm is based on “*Biya must share*” strategy.

(c) The Opposition of proposition

It is characterized by a strong ideological outfit, working more on ideas rather than revolutionary propaganda. Emerging from the mass base within the same party, the Opposition of proposition seeks mainly for a redress of grievances either in terms of party policy or party performance. It may sometimes break away as splinter group but more often than not stays within as mainstream members disagreeing at their own risk and peril, with party focus. The case of the Progressive or Modernist wing of the CPDM comes out with its lists of grievances presented in “The White Book” written by Chief Milla Assoute. The recent (31st August 2007) defiance by the CPDM Parliamentary candidate Honorable Adama Modi Bakary to contest for the post of Speaker of the National Assembly against the party hierarchy’s choice (Honorable Cavaye Yegue Djibril) is another case in point. The political mindset of this group is based on “*Biya must change*” strategy.

In sum, it has been easy to determine the Opposition of conviction from the Opposition of convenience within the electoral process in Cameroon with the latter always taking a strong numerical rise albeit with a weak ideological stance over the former. In the end we have witnessed an Opposition that has over the years become vehicles for the maximization of the interests of political opportunists and not frameworks for mobilizing popular forces for genuine change (Tangie 1998:127). This has had a toll on our democratization which according to Francis Nyamnjoh has served mainly as a face powder, used to justify reactionary propaganda by the ruling party and its acolytes and revolutionary propaganda by the Opposition (Nyamnjoh 1999:115).

Shortcomings of the Opposition

It is generally accepted that the playing field in Cameroon does not militate in favour of Opposition parties winning elections. With no genuine **independent/neutral persons** within an Independent Electoral Commission, the elections have been reduced to a two horse race between the CPDM and the RDPC. In effect there are a lot of exogenous factors that deprive the Opposition from starting the election race on the same block as the ruling party-disenfranchisement, nonchalant international community, low civic participation, mass rigging, sterile political debates occasioned by the trading of accusations of illegitimacy between the ruling party and the Opposition parties etc (Fonchingong 2004: 35).

But apart from these, there are failures that are inherent in the modus operandi and structures of Opposition parties in Cameroon. They include:

(a) Lack of internal democracy

The first thing one notices is that all Opposition parties have as Chairmen or Presidents those who founded the parties. So for close to two decades the same people who created or founded these parties are in the helm of affairs (Ngwane 2004:21) Paradoxically, most of these Opposition members were hell bent on pushing the ruling party leader Paul Biya out of power when he was “only” eight years as President of the country (1982-1990) and “only” five years as Chairman of his CPDM party (1985-1990).

The case of the main Opposition party (SDF) is a cause for concern. Apart from the tenacity syndrome of its leader, Article 8.2 of the party's constitution raises controversy on the notions of dissent versus debate and discipline versus dictatorship. Only recently (August 11, 2007), five elected mayors were dismissed for not complying with the caprices of the National Investiture Committee. Before this, the axe or guillotine of Article. 8.2 has fallen on militants who oppose policies or performances of hierarchy. Yet it must be recalled that the SDF was founded "to rid the Cameroonian society of a system that deprives people from being free men or otherwise punishing them for daring to think freely, associate freely, assemble peacefully and freely".

This long stay of leadership at the helm of all Opposition parties has resulted in party clientelism, personality cult, and the personalization of power.

(b) Lack of an Opposition leadership consensus

Since the creation of Opposition parties, attempts at instituting an identifiable, credible and consensual leadership and program have failed. Unlike, other African countries that have a clear leadership within the Opposition (Gabon, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Zimbabwe) the case of Cameroon in which Ni Fru Ndi would have easily stood out as the rallying point Opposition leader owing to his mass grass roots support has been met with contempt for his relatively "low academic" baggage and mistrust for his Anglophone origin. Fru Ndi's own inflexibility and temper tantrums have sometimes not helped matters.

c) Broken strategic alliances

Alliances formed before elections get broken even before the elections take off. The "Directorate" "Union for Change" Allied forces for Change", "Coalition for National Reconciliation and Reconstruction", have not been as coherent and program-focused as for example that of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) by the Opposition in Kenya, set up in the 2002 Presidential elections, resulting in a victory of 62.2 per cent. A new Opposition alliance of unknown faces has just been created (27th August 2007) in Cameroon calling itself "Dynamique pour le Changement."

d) Disconnection with democratic development

Most Opposition parties concern themselves with what happens during elections and not what takes place between elections. In other words, within the five years that span municipal/ legislative elections and the seven years that span Presidential elections, the Opposition parties do not connect with the population on issues of daily survival (power cuts, fuel price hike, inflation, water outage, unemployment, industrial action etc) and on government policies (IMF policies, sub regional or continental disaffection etc). This is compounded by the poor performance of some of elected Opposition party representatives in local councils and the National Assembly.

Therefore, it is necessary, as Achille Mbembe has pointed out, for the opposition to define a real strategy towards a social struggle (social democracy and democratic development) that is adapted to the present Cameroonian conditions (Mbembe 2004:12).

e) Lack of linkages with Activist Elements of civil society.

One of the most important groups in the pro-democracy movement is the activist elements in civil society, which include the human rights lobby, minority rights groups, movements for the empowerment and participation of marginalized groups such as women and youth, students and labour the Church and the media. (Ake 2000:135). The Opposition in Cameroon built organic linkages with these groups in the early 90s but the relationship has strained due to so many reasons. Yet it was the youths that gave power to the Opposition leader (Abdoulaye Wade) in Senegal; it is the feminization of power policy that Paul Kagame of Rwanda survives on, the Opposition leader Morgan Tswangirai of Zimbabwe feeds on workers union (himself a product of it) and most recently on the church.

Projections before 2011

The real battle for the sustenance of democracy in Cameroon lies on what happens between now and 2011 (when President Paul Biya is expected to constitutionally quit office).

i) Positive Peaceful Avenue

Contrary to other hypotheses put forward, I take the risk of misjudgment to say that Paul Biya is actively preparing his smooth

political exit. His desire for his party to have a crushing majority in the National Assembly is neither to elongate his tenure of office nor to return the country to a one-party system. It is, in my opinion, to leave the political scene secured enough that his peers do not witch-hunt him. He is creating a dominant party state to forestall all Opposition success after him. This has been the strategy of Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Olesugun Obasanjo of Nigeria and it is being noticed with Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. Biya's thawing of his erstwhile icy relations with Nigeria and Gabon only testify to his smooth political exit. Infact if the present constitution (18 January 1996) is to be tinkered it may not be Art.6.2 that specifies the seven year and last tenure of office for Mr. Paul Biya but Arts. 6.4 (a) and (b) that would return the "successor-ship" of the Presidency back to the Prime Minister in case of vacancy of the former. And the "successor-ship" hypothesis provides the Opposition with a beacon of hope. That is if Biya's successor does not draw enough party consensus it may force some of the Opposition of proposition militants in the CPDM to join camps with the Opposition of liberation, Opposition of cooptation and activist elements of the civil society to win fresh elections. It happened in Kenya when Daniel Arap Moi chose Uhuru Kenyatta as the KANU party leader giving way for the joint Opposition alliances (NARC) to win. If Biya's successor within the CPDM party does not command the same aura, he (party successor) may lose elections to the Opposition like it happened in Sierra Leone in 2007.

Neutrality and Independence

Of course for this to happen, President Paul Biya would have to assume a neutral states man status (something which has been recurrent in his recent speeches) and not interfere with the 2011 Presidential elections. He has always wanted to be remembered as the person who brought democracy to Cameroon and it would be in his interest to leave the scene with that legacy.

Ahmed Tedjan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, in spite of his lackluster performance as President of Sierra Leone for over ten years has been praised for his non- interference in the 2007 electoral process which led the Opposition to power. Mathieu Kerekou of

Benin and Ould Ahmed Taya of Mauritania are of this same democratic school.

The second condition would be for ELECAM (the election body that will manage the 2011 elections) in spite of some of its shortcomings, to recruit people of courage, independent stance, integrity and sterling patriotic qualities to manage the body. In other words it is not the name of the institution that makes it independent it is the people chosen to manage it.

Thirdly, the electoral law needs to be revised to allow **Independent Candidates** to run for Presidential elections without the infamous 300 signature clause. Related to this would be the need for a second round or run-off electoral process to be introduced during the 2011 Presidential elections. Still in this connection the civil service, the judiciary and the army must be depoliticised (Mbile 1990:14). I also propose that a law be enacted before 2011 that gives a special status (immunity, allowances etc.) to ex-Presidents of the country.

Fourthly while the elite should resist the peddling of compensatory development advantages by parties, the Cameroonian electorate would have to rise above its present inertia blind party adherence and refuse to be cheaply bought over by allurements and material inducements (bags of rice and bottles of beer etc). The youth in particular must see the long term advantage of building a sustainable development policy for Cameroon rather than trivial immediate interests that border on greed and gluttony. This means constant political education should be provided by activist elements of the civil society with funding assistance from Development Agents.

Lastly and to quote Peter Vakunta, the democratic impasse in Cameroon is not just systemic; the personalities running the show are obsolete and should be gotten rid off without further ado. Anything short of that would be tantamount to political suicide for as all (Vakunta 2005).

ii) Negative Peaceful Avenue

If the positive peaceful avenue fails, at best, activist elements or prodemocracy movements in the civil society may throw caution to the wind and shed all party influences to embrace the streets for a repeat of the 1991 Ghost town experiences but this time on their own

terms. This happened in Guinea in 2007 when the populace foisted their agenda on the political class. At worse militocracy may rear its head as used to be the case when civilian chaos and predatory governance jeopardise genuine democracy and national unity in Africa.

Conclusion

In spite of all external odds, the Opposition in Cameroon still survives, albeit waning in numerical strength, controversial in ideological focus and riven with leadership tussles. This is symptomatic of the liberal democratic choice most African countries adopted rather than a peculiar disease with our Cameroonian political system (Ngwane 2004:18). From all indications, the fruits of the second independence have still not been borne and may be a new democratic transition bringing all active forces together in an **ALL Cameroonian Congress** may help chart a new course that would go beyond routine elections and usher in bold, creative and indigenous development programs that resonate with human and infrastructural development. Even where the pendulum of leadership has oscillated between ruling party and the Opposition in most African countries (recycled prebendalism) the masses have still not felt the impact of people driven programs and nation building projects.

It is therefore my hope that what happens between now and 2011 (and this means every patriotic Cameroonian should speak up and out) would lay a solid democratic foundation that would give birth to a leadership that shall inspire citizen confidence and national solidarity so that Cameroonians can put behind them the two decades of the elections of rigging and ranting and the politics of party clientelism and state failure.

Note

An earlier version of this this paper was presented at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Forum “Political Dialogue” on Thursday 30th August 2007, Yaoundé, Cameroon

References

African Elections Database, [http// African elections. tripod com/cm.html](http://African%20elections.tripod.com/cm.html).

- Ake, C., (2000) *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, Dakar CODESRIA
- Alou, M.T., (2002) 'Democratic consolidation and the future of democratization processes in Africa,' *CODESRIA Bulletin*, nos 3 and 4
- Fonchingong, C, (2004) 'The travails of democratization in Cameroon in the context of political liberalization since the 1990s,' *African and Asian studies*, vol 3, no.1.
- Mbembe, A, (2004) 'Il faut que M Biya s'en aille,' Interview *Le Messenger*, November 8th.
- Mbile, N.N., (1990) 'The multiparty Debate,' Cameroon Life Magazine, Buea Cameroon
- Ngwane, G (2004) 'Cameroon's Democratic process, Vision 2020,' *CODESRIA Bulletin*, nos 3 and 4
- Ngwane, G (2004) *Way forward for Africa*, Design Publishing House, Limbe
- Ngwane, G. (1996) *Settling Disputes in Africa*, Yaounde: Buma Kor Publishers
- Nyamnjoh, F, (1999) 'Cameroon: a country united by ethnic ambition and difference,' *African Affairs*, Vol.98, no.390
- Olukoshi, A (ed) (1998) *The Politics of Opposition in contemporary Africa*, Nordic.Africa, Uppsala, Sweden
- Tangie, N.F, (1998) 'Multipartyism and Democratisation in Cameroon,' *Journal of Third World Studies*, vo1. Xv, No.2,
- Vakunta .P, (2005) 'Comments in reaction to Ngwane's article *Cameroon's Democratic process, Vision 2020*' in www.gngwane.com

Chapter Fifteen

What Powers for the Chairman of the African Union Commission?

For many of us, it did not matter whether it was Alpha Oumar Konare, Amara Essy, Miguel Trovoada or some consensual candidate who became the new Chairman of the African Union Commission after the July 2003 African Union Summit in Maputo- Mozambique.

They all have a rich diplomatic career (not necessarily international) and a relative infatuation with Pan- Africanism. In fact, at this present historic evolution of the African Union, fuelled by the radical desire for fast –track African Unity, the African people would have preferred a chairman who combines the charismatic supra-nationalism of Kwame Nkrumah, the fiery bravado of Muammer Gadaffi, the level-headed diplomacy of Salim Ahmend Salim, and the grassroots touch of Aminata Dramane Traore. Even without considering these intrinsic sterling qualities, it is argued that past Secretaries- General of the OAU who dared to raise their supra- national vision above the territorial binoculars of Head of States, have faced the music. Think of Boubaka Diallo Telli (1964-72), Nzo Ekeagwu (1972-74) and Edem Kojo (1978-83).

Thus, the paramount concerns after the Maputo Summit are, in my opinion, two issues; the powers and functions of the Chairman of the African Union Commission, and the structural implementation of some of the basic organs of the African Union that impact directly on the lives of the African people. I will, for the purpose of his paper, focus on the first issue. Article 20 of the African Union Treaty that transforms the Secretariat General to a commission, describes it as an organ whose “structure, functions and regulations shall be determined by the assembly.”

Hitherto, Article XVII of the OAU Charter appeared to have been cleared on the expectations from its Secretary-General:

- a) In the performance of their duties, the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the organization. They shall refrain from any action, which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the organization.

- b) Each member of the organization undertakes to respect the exclusive character of the responsibilities of the Secretary – General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities (1992: 8-9).

Part II, Rules 6 and 7 further say, “the Secretary- General directs the activities of the General Secretariat and is its legal representative. He is directly responsible to the council of Ministers for the adequate discharge of all duties assigned to him” (1992: 18-19).

Beyond these constitutional provisions, the reality on the ground is that past Secretaries- General were acting as errand scribes, who merely rubber-stamped decisions by Heads of state, irrespective of their relevance to the quality of life of the people. The Secretaries- General were reduced to important spokespersons monitored by national jingoism and weathered by the controversial search for a common ground. To succeed as a Secretary General, one had to be a renowned bureaucrat, an administrative Secretary to the annual summit Chairman, or a continental Minister of Communication. One had to be an intra-organ Supervisor, not an inter-African spokesperson.

With the creation of the African Union, the terms of reference and office of the Chairman of the Commission need to be spelt out .that is why within the one year period (2001-2002) that Amara Essy was interim Secretary –General, he was hell bent on stamping his authority on his 600-person staff. He told the “New African” magazine: “you know you cannot be accepted wholly and unanimously by people. Even Jesus Christ had enemies” (2002: 26). In his interim stint as Chairman of the African Union Commission (2002-2003), Amara Essy meticulously performed the rubber-stamped role of allowing protagonist nations, especially South Africa and Nigeria (notice how Libya’s Gadaffi today, like Ghana’s Nkrumah yesterday, is being elbowed out) to speak for Africa. Indeed, the last African Union political year saw more of the shuttle political diplomacy of Obasanjo and Mbeki than the active militant presence of Amara Essy. Intended to be complimentary, these roles may end up being counter- productive. Hence, the need for a job prescription for the chairman of the African Union Commission. But, can the Assembly of Head of States prescribe a role that will obscure them to oblivion? That president Laurant Gbagbo of Cote

d'Ivoire, on 23rd June 2003, on French Radio, lambasted Alpha Konare for devaluing the post of Head of States by running or the running for the post of Chairman of the commission is an indicator of how condescending Heads of States look at the post chairman. However, scholars do not seem to share Gbago's view. Cameroonian scholar, Maurice Tadajeu, in his book, "Confederation de Etats-Unis d'afrique" (1996), proposes that the Secretary General (Commissioner) be transformed by referendum into a continental Government. The Head of such a Government would be called the chief Executive Officer (chairman) and shall be elected for a non-renewable five-year term by a confederal parliament (not Head of State). He shall direct the political, military, economic and cultural development of Africa (1996:44-46). This proposal partially follows Kwame Nkrumah's logic for an All African Union Government whose foundation was laid in Accra, July 1, 1961, as well as Muammar Gadaffi's present war cry for a United States of Africa whose shot was fired in sirte, September 9, 1999.

Two other scholars, Jean-Emmanuel Pondi and Franciaose-Hervé Moudourou in their book, "le secretaire Général de l'OUA dans système International" (1996), prefer to profit the corporate qualities of any one who aspires to the post of secretary-General

(Chairman of African Union Commission): "He/ She must be a Pan- African leader, an ingenious manager, a polyglot, a committed visionary and a renowned internationalist." (1996: 118).

Cameroonian journalist, Ebokem Formenky, advised in his "Cameroon Tribune" column (1994): "if the OUA is really expected to play the role itd founding fathers meant it to play, its most prestigious servant (secretary- General cum Chairman) should have a status higher than what he presently has in term of continental protocol" (1994:3).

I wrote in my book, "Settling Disputes in Africa" (1996), that "the OAU Secretary – General must assume a new role, that of a veritable policeman. He must become authoritative and committed to all African affairs. The powers of Heads of States over the supreme organs of the OUA need to be reduced with greater power given to the secretary- General enabling him to act independently on pressing matters" (1996:127).

The European Union which, it is claimed, inspired the creation of the African Union, gives a stronger role to the Commission. The book, "serving the European Union" (1996), explains that "the role and responsibilities of the European Commission place it firmly at the heart of the European Union's policy making process. In some respects, it acts as the heart of Europe, from which the other institutions derive much of their energy and purpose. Members of the Commission are obliged to be completely indifferent to their national governments and to act only in the interest of the Union. The President (Chairman) is chosen by the Heads OF State after consulting the European Parliament. In all, the European Commission has three distinct important functions: (i) initiating proposals for legislation (ii) guardian of Treaties and (iii) manager and Executor of Union policies and of Interntional Tread Relationships" (1996:13-15).

While Muammer Gadaffi supported an African Union cast in the mould of the European Union, he nonetheless advised his peers to empower most of the organs of the parliament and commission that are less potent in the European Union. This call has not yet been heeded.

In conclusion, our Heads of State have to do more to convince the 800 million people of Africa that the African Union is not a mere change of name. As it is today, it is a far cry from suggestions that scholars and activists have made of "an African Union that can act as an excutive organism capable of making decisions that are binding to members states." the annual rotation of African Union Summits and Chairpersons/ Host of the Union, cloud the role of the chairman of the commission and the importance of its headquarters. And what if these summits held every four years to coincide with the tem of office of the chairman and to give the commission enough time to pursue and implement laid down policies? And what if within these four years, Heads of State focused on national electoral promises, sub-regional intergration, economy, and friendly visits? Would this not minimize international posturing (angels abroad, mediocre at home), petty rivary and discordant African positions vis-à-vis international Relations?

It is believed that the Arican Union can only offer what our national and sub-regional entities have. Whatever role we prescribed

for the African Union Commission and its Chairman and how fast we implement people- oriented organs of the African Union, will be our political litmus test to pursuing, in the short term, the fourteen objectives that govern the African Union and, in the middle term, the birth of a United States of Africa.

Chapter Sixteen

Democracy Never Dies

Stab it with the sword of dictatorship, slit it with the knife of prebendalism or shoot it with the gun of military/civilian coup d'états, democracy never dies. Essentially meaning maximum citizen participation in public affairs and accountability by the rulers, democracy may become terminally ill but cannot be clinically dead. It may go through a coma or even lie unconsciously cold, but given the right therapy, it bounces back to life – fresher with buoyancy and fuller of virility.

In the years of yore, missionaries-cum-colonialists tried to destroy the basic tenets of Africa democracy, hoping to foist on us (Africa) a brand of civilization that would uproot and alienate us from traditional solidarity. They thought they had a divine mission to make us out of their images and consequently, let our development and model of governance be fashioned after the prime benefit of Europe and American; but time has proven them wrong.

Spirit of Democracy

It is the form of democracy that has been imposed on Africa – the traditional spirit of democracy is still alive, albeit waning. The whole African continent and its people have in their histories, been victims of colonial oppression. Four centuries of slavery, three centuries of apartheid, one century of colonialism and half an century of neo-colonialism have left the African any not bitter. The traumatic experience of Nelson Mandela, under white rule, confirm us as people with a “short-term hate memory.” We still believe in palaver tradition - the culture of elders sitting under a tree and talking until they agree. It is a tradition rooted in the philosophy that consensus can be arrived at only when popular and broad-based discussions have been conducted.

Finally, we have always believed in the seminal concept that the society is greater than the individual and so the whole idea of economic individualism, instead of economic sharing, is an athema. Rulers who have glorified economic individualism in vain like Bokassa, Mengistu and Mabutu have faced the wrath of the people. The question therefore is, if Africa and Africans still posses the

traditional yeast of democracy, how come that until now the breath of development and peace still remain below the economic margin?

If democratic entitlement is rooted in Africa culture, why are we still under siege? Simple! Imperialism, which Nkrumah calls the last stage of neo-colonialism has taken our present leadership hostage. Our post-colonial leaders continue to turn their backs on our institutions and our people in favour of begging and borrowing pilgrimages to Western capitals. They have constituted into a coterie of predatory bosses whose only *raison d'être* is to advance a colonial agenda on Africans and a nauseating kleptocracy on our common wealth. Whether as power mongers or pirates in power, this educated class, from which a ruling elite emerges, is bent on destroying our traditional symmetry of social organization and eradicating the last vestiges of our structural democratic values. Economic sharing among the people is giving way to economic individualism among ruling elite. Tribal solidarity among people is yielding place to ethnic chauvinism – all of these are meant to keep the vibrant rulers far away from the despondent masses.

Custodian of collective interest

A state that uses party loyalty and ethnic affinity as reward mechanisms ceases to be custodian of the collective interest of the people. It loses its responsibility and authority as a precursor of balanced development, good governance and co-operative security. It is a state of anarchy, not democracy. Popular participation in governance is yielding place to appointment to positions of prestige (not real power). This has led to national disintegration, state paranoia and economic underdevelopment. Respect for society values is being transformed to respect for personal egos. As an endangered people, we must resist this new wave of democratic killing. We must strengthen the structural bases of our civil society – a society equipped with education that gives us the opportunity to make intelligent perception of our political and economic landscape. Such perception will be guided by performance contracts or programme orientations not by personality cults or tribal caucuses. Such perceptions should make the citizen a player not a pawn in the socio-economic political chessboard of his country.

We long for the days when the state will become the protector of every citizen, no matter his/her political belief or party

leanings. We yearn for the days when development gains shall not be predicated on chaotic economic expediencies. For, indeed democracy goes beyond periodic elections; but if elections must be done, they should not be done to foist illegitimacy on the people.

For those who are trying to kill democracy, they will only end up like the child who throws sand at the sun. During these challenging times when most African leaders are embarking on a journey without maps, the tendency is for them to survive by stabbing, slitting or shooting democracy. But African people weep not, for democracy never dies. And when the people will decide to attend the burial of their leaders' conscience, a new leadership will emerge that will sing new patriotic songs and write new developmental verses – and once more democracy will hit the road.

Chapter Seventeen

The September Sirte Summit-cradle of African Union

The month of September reminds one of the anniversary of the historic extraordinary summit of the Organization of African Unity, OAU, held in Sirte Libya on September 9, 1999. This summit, convened by Muammar Ghadaffi brought together more than forty Heads of State and Governments 'to deliberate extensively on the ways and means of strengthening the OAU and to make it more effective so as to keep pace with political, economic and social development taking place within and outside Africa'. The outcome of the summit was the demise of the OAU, the conceptual framework of an African Union and the unanimous resolve to accelerate the process of implementing the African Economic Community, AEC treaty. Inspired by the ideals of the founding fathers of African Unity and convinced that the continent's leadership needed to be relevant to the aspirations of its people, the positive steps taken to practically concretize the new African Union have been unprecedented given the legendary lethargy of our leaders towards people-oriented development. First, in the OAU summit in Lome Togo in 2000, twenty seven out of thirty seven Heads of state signed the draft proposal of the African Union. The following year in the Lusaka summit, a new Secretary General Amara Essy was elected and modalities for a new economic agenda called NEPAD (New partnership for African Development) were put in place. Then on 9, July 2004, there was the launching of the African Union and the election of its first ever Chairman Alpha Konare at the ASBA stadium in Durban South Africa. The subsequent African Union summits in Maputo, Mozambique 2003 and in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in 2004 have witnessed the creation of a Governance watch dog called the African Peer Review mechanism, the creation of a peace and security council, the locating of the seat of the pan African parliament in South Africa, the adoption of a percentage quota 0.5 per cent of membership payment to the Union and the use of an African Language (Swahili) during the deliberations of the summit in Addis Ababa 2004.

All of these looks like a pass mark for the Union. But beyond these startling achievements lie some very intriguing questions that need to be urgently addressed by every African and Africanists.

The Vision

If the spirit of the Sirte Summit prevails in the Union, its vision is a cause for concern. The Sirte vision conceived by Libya and quickly supported by Gambia, Mali, Togo, Tchad and Congo believed in the African Economic Community (AEC) treaty as the economic roadmap of Africa. Basically a homegrown and indigenous inspired document, the AEC focuses on localization and the need, according to Thandikara Mkandawire for Africa to reclaim the driver's seat in articulating the solution for our economic development problems" Given a majority stance, the Sirte visionaries would have quickly transformed Africa into a Nkrumah's United States of Africa. However, since the Durban launching of the African Union, there has been a shift in vision of this organization perpetrated by South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria and Senegal. The Durban visionaries are Global Pan Africanists who continue to believe that Africa's salvation would come from an integrationist yet renegotiated relationship with the International Community. For many reasons, the Durban vision today like the Monrovia block yesterday seems to be eclipsing the Sirte vision. Does any one therefore doubt why Muammar Gaddafi seems to have been given a distant shoulder in the Union?

Popular Participation

Popular participation to the ideals of the AU can be more meaningful if the people and grassroots organization are allowed to be involved in discussions and decision-making first within their individual countries, then within the Union. If the AU is regarded as an African Revolution then it must work with the people for as Steve Biko said "to take part in the African Revolution with the people, it is not enough to write revolutionary song. You must fashion the revolution with the people and if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves".

Instead of waiting for Rwanda and Darfur to happen, member states must provide a democratic environment and

intellectual freedom that would ensure that the Pan African Parliament and the imminent Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the AU become the voice of the silent yet oppressed majority of Africans. It must be for this reason Sirte visionaries gave the African Congress a greater authority than the present advisory authority of the Pan African Parliament. For those of us who took part at the civil society forum in Libya in 2000, the guiding philosophy remains one of networking and increased advocacy among pan African civil society organisations.

Single currency

Article 19 of the AU draws inspiration from the Sirte proposal by instituting the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund and the African Investment Bank. These institutions would have their *raison d'être* when we adopt a single currency; a single currency will be the greatest structural change since it will be backed by a common and an enormous Gross National Product. It took the European Union three stages with a life span of seven years to get a single currency. But above all it took a political will and citizen advocacy to make it come true. Africa can also perform its own miracle.

African Citizenship

The Sirte proposals advocated the lifting of barriers that prevent the free circulation of persons, goods, financial flows, commerce and animal resources within the continent. If the AU were to borrow from this clause, then it will be necessary to construct and improve telecommunication and transport infrastructure between member states (Pan African Network) abolish custom or tax barriers, limit border checks and provide employment opportunity to citizens outside their member states in skills that are unexploited. But above all, it is time to create a common African passport and abolish visas among Africans.

The Western media have had the greatest control on the minds of Africans to the extent that mental and cultural imperialism will remain the battle to be fought in the years ahead. Our scholars, writers, journalist (artistes) and the AU need to reverse this trend. The AU needs to institute a Pan African media council (especially a Pan African TV channel) that shall condition our entry into a new

world information order based on our ability to winnow or filter the kinds of information and images that other people conjure for us.

The clarion call today is for the AU to revisit the goals it set for itself during the September 99 Sirte summit in Libya otherwise it may become as irrelevant as the OAU during its last years of existence.

Note

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The Post* newspaper of September 13, 2004 and in *The African Nation* newspaper (U.S.A) of November 2006.

Chapter Eighteen

Cameroon's new twist in pan African solidarity

Cameroon is no stranger to Pan African diplomacy. Situated within an enviable central geographical axis, and endowed with a multicultural pluralism, Cameroon has prided herself of being “Africa in miniature” Her formative years of post-independence were characterised by an Afrocentric presence that culminated in the respect of her leadership in Pan African diplomacy. Granted, if Amadou Ahidjo did not choose the moderate Monrovia group as opposed to Nkrumah’s visionary wing of the Casablanca, history would have recorded that today’s attempt at rekindling the Nkrumah’s candle of Pan Africanism within the African Union is part of Cameroon’s success story. Yet Cameroonian early leadership made such a muscular and vocal diplomatic offensive on African Affairs that the country did not only produce two secretary generals of the O.A.U but became the quintessence of what was then called “the African epoch”.

Under the second Republic, Pan Africanism as an institutional ideology became too discreet. Apart from hosting the O.A.U summit in 1996, the Pan African commitment in Cameroon has almost paled into diplomatic significance.

But two recent events under the Ephraim Inoni government seem to herald a new impetus in Cameroon’s ambition to a greater Pan African solidarity.

On 25 May 2005, the Minister of External relations Laurent Eso invited African diplomats resident in Yaounde to celebrate the African liberation day. He exalted the diplomats and Africans to work hard towards strengthening the achievements of the African Union.

Then on 1st July 2005, Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni stretched a diplomatic hand of solidarity to the same diplomats, urging them to unit in the face of continental challenges and international relations.

Coming ahead of the African Union Summit (4 – 5 July) in Libya and the G8 summit (5 – 7 July) in Scotland, the 25 May and

1st July concertation sent a new signal of fresh Pan African intercourse between Cameroon and its resident Africa diplomats.

The significance of the 25 May and 1st July concertations lies or should lie on President Paul Biya's thinking in Communal Liberation "aware of the fact that a disunited Africa cannot hope to change anything in the world order, we believe that Cameroon should master all its force so as to contribute, regional and Sub-regional level"

If these two concertations are to be interpreted as a meaningful expression of a new Pan African commitment, the institutional innovation, attitudinal changes and grassroots outreach programmes should now be considered.

First, there is a possibility of creating a Ministry for African integration in Cameroon as it obtains in Mali, Senegal, Libya etc or the reinforcement of the Department of African Affairs in the Ministry of External Relations. Such a structure would not only help disseminate the idea of the African Union, but would in partnership with Pan African civil society organization, develop activities that bring the Cameroonian people closer to the vision of the African Union. Some of these activities include pursuing the African week programme (1st week of July), instituting African Union clubs in schools, organizing African arts and culture events, encouraging Pan African youth Summits as it is in Zambia and focusing on endogenous development initiatives.

Second, Cameroon's top leadership needs to be actively present in all African rendezvous. It needs to lend its voice in areas of conflict management, governance discourse and development agendas in Africa. The mature approach of Cameroon leadership in the Bakassi stalemate and the Equato – Guinean friction, attests to the wealth of peace building strategies (under the tree discussion) inherent in our political mindset.

Third, we need to reconnect with the Diaspora by reaching out to the bulk of Cameroonian human resources lying fallow under other skies. It was a courageous step President Amadou Toumani Toure of Mali took when he invited his country people in the Diaspora to a national forum so as to integrate wasted expertise into the country's wanting experience. Then our Embassies need partnership coalition network outside of the country with those genuinely interested in Cameroon's human development.

Fourth, Cameroon's geopolitical location in both the Central and West Africa Sub-region makes her a potential pivotal state capable of enhancing trans-African transport and communicating infrastructure, facilitating intra-African trade, eliminating transfrontal security harassments, and maintaining a hospitable attitude towards non-Cameroonians of African stock.

Fifth, Cameroon is imbued with an intellectual and professional wherewithal, while an enabling environment should be provided to curb brain drain, there must also be a government offensive for Cameroonians interested in brain gain through an international (pro-African) career.

This brings to focus the importance of vocational, technical and agricultural training in our society. If we have to switch from a consumer state to a producer nation, if we may be counted among the emerging industrialised nations like Botswana, Malaysia, Singapore etc then we need to invest in blue collar training and adopt the time tested theory of producing what we consume.

Lastly, solidarity, like charity must begin at home; a country cannot offer what it does not have. In legitimate pursuit of Pan African solidarity, Cameroon's diplomacy must first and foremost drink deep from the fountain of Africa's indigenous democratic and development entitlements. Let me just mention three of them – the South African “Ubuntu” philosophy that emphasizes empathy not sympathy. Ubuntu philosophy underlies the statement of collectivity – “I am because we are”. It places the interest of society over that of the individual. Then there is the Lesotho “Lekgotla” style of discussion which focuses on disagreement without being disagreeable. “Lekgotla” is the Sotho name for community parliament where matters of the nation are discussed collectively and wisdom is shared. In “Lekgotla” the politicians do not arrogate to themselves the monopoly of knowledge; instead they derive their orientations through divergent perspectives from the civil society.

Then there is Nyerere's “ujamma” concept of development which is informed by the cooperative economics of sharing not accumulating, of self-reliance not dependency. Ujamaa has a rational message to what Paul Biya calls in Communalism Liberalism “mbangsuma” which is the Cameroonian practice whereby two or more people are moved by the feeling of solidarity

to pledge never to eat anything without sharing it with the other pledgers.

Finally Cameroon's legitimate quest for Pan African solidarity must start with a genuine Pax Camerooniana humanism.

This way, the 25 May and 1st July concertations will not be seen as a one time event but a life time process aimed at galvanizing a national consciousness and charting an Afrocentric agenda.

Indeed, these laudable concertations took place at a time when Africa is in the eye of the storm therefore, Cameroon's intellectual and diplomatic contribution to a United Africa, coming from the Inoni initiative, should henceforth remain a permanent preoccupation of Paul Biya's last Presidential term of office.

Note

This essay appeared in *The Post* newspaper of July 11, 2005 and in *The Voice newsmagazine* (Netherlands) Vol 7.No. 70. October 2005

Chapter Nineteen

Because we were involved (Reflections on the All Anglophone Conference ten years after)

On April 2-3, 1993, anyone who was someone in the Anglophone community in Cameroon trudged to the Mount Mary Hospital in the town of Buea for a constitutional therapy. Since the Foumban talks of July 1961, Cameroonians of English expression had not had an opportunity to discuss what political pundits call “the unfinished business” of the Anglophone – Francophone relationship in Cameroon. So when President Paul BIYA rejected the Sovereign National Conference and opted for a Tripartite meeting of representatives of Government, political parties and Independent personalities from 30 October - 18 November 1991, to examine two draft documents – one, laying down conditions for the election of members of the National Assembly and the other, a draft decree governing the access of political parties to the public media – the need to widen the terms of reference was felt and expressed as soon as the meeting went into session. In the event, the meeting’s agenda was extended so as to include the examination of ways of adapting the constitution of Cameroon to the process of liberalisation and democratisation that was taking place (Munzu, 1992). That was the stimulus of the All Anglophone Conference (AAC I) of April 2-3, 1993.

But maybe when as a college teacher in Mundemba, I wrote the book *The Mungo Bridge* (1990), I was inadvertently jumpstarting the constitutional engineering conferred on the Tripartite Technical committee. *The Mungo Bridge* is my most profound inspiration to Cameroon’s state behaviour. At one moment, specifically March 10-24 1990, my fountain of inspiration was delayed following my incarceration in the *Brigade Mixte Mobile* (BMM) - Ekondotiti. Three teachers (Njong, Ebini and Mengot) and I were accused of “writing subversive articles against constituted authority”. I remember the day these four huge “commandos” came for me. They kicked open the parlour door with reckless ferocity; asked my late mother to lie prostrate, then broke the door of our bedroom and with a gun pointed at my eight-and-a-half month pregnant wife they asked her

to show them where I had been hiding my “subversive” articles. I sat behind the house unruffled by this Ramboesque din because only two days earlier, I had been tipped off by a Gendarme officer that I would be arrested.

I strolled in and surrendered myself for what turned out to be a two-week arrest on the orders of the then Senior Divisional Officer for Ndian division. The day we were released, a teeming crowd of both the known and the nameless gathered in front of my house for a surprise homecoming party. It then dawned on me like an epiphany that the Cameroonian society is divided between a silent majority that knows the truth and a vocal minority that hoodwinks it.

That silent majority, everywhere in the world waits for the right persons at the right time to translate their internal disenchantment into an external symphony. And so while in the B.M.M we heard of the Yondo Black affair and two months after the B.M.M, the SDF party was launched in Bamenda. Was the Cameroonian leadership now prepared for debate? Was our simpering elite prepared to incise the abscess of the Anglophone problem and thaw their ice of prebendalism? Were we ready to provide a legal and social framework and foundation suitable for the construction of a new Cameroonian society?

Through some ‘good – riddance’ transfer, I found myself in Buea (1991) where the climate of intellectual debate was at fever pitch. Buea, was the city that produced the famous magazine *Cameroon Life* with committed writers like Francis Wache, Bate Besong, Mbella Sone Dipoko, Tande Dibussi, Nouck Protous, Victor Ngoh, Charly Ndi Chia etc., all pursuing the path of Anglophone historiography.

I joined this generation of virile patriots yearning “to fulfil rather than betray a mission” (Fanon). Any newspaper that did not carry the by-line of Jing Thomas, Godfrey Tangwa, Ntemfac Ofeye, Paddy Mbawa, Epie Ngome, Tahoe, Dipoko Adolph, Wamey, Zama, etc., was not worth reading. We turned book launches into our Hyde Park and Tianamen Square. Our writings had something in common- Federalism. We were all federalists – some for a pre-1972 condition, others for two-by-x states and others for a ten-state federation, but we were all apologists of a united Cameroon based on a Federal structure.

As a Pan Africanist committed to a common African citizenship, I do not support the balkanisation of African countries especially on neo-colonial linguistic cleavages; hence the call for any visionary leadership to turn both colonial and indigenous dichotomies into rainbow coalitions. We believed that those Anglophone grievances stated by Bernard Fonlon in “Will we make or mar?” (1964); Gorji Dinka in the “New social Order” (1985); North West/South West Elite in Littoral Province “Memo to President Biya” (1985); Nfor Nfor in “To Cameroon Patriots” (1990); Albert Mukong in “the case for Southern Cameroons” (1990); Ngam Chia in the “path to social justice” (1990); Foncha in “Memo on return to federalism” (1991); Albert Ngwana’s manifesto in “The CDP” (1991); and Elad, Munzu, Anyangwe in “The Anglophone Problem” (1992) etc., were far beyond the bravado of lone rangers. They were echoes of an emasculated community needing legitimate and rational packaging.

Having sown the seeds of AAC through writing, it was time to water them. Work towards AAC began in Barrister Charles Taku’s former Chambers (now turned into a garage) in Bonduma - Buea. As the debate became interesting so did the size of the actors - Ntoko, Tabot, Wirsuy, Ekiko, BB, Anu, Ekema, Monangai, Tazifor, Njang, Nganda, Django, then from Douala- Ebini, Feko, Visha, Nsoh, Kebila etc then from Bamenda- Pa Chi, Zama, Eba, Nsamenang, etc. Obviously Taku’s Chambers had become too small, so deliberations were carried over to Batasof hotel, Great Soppo. As revisionist writers and civil society agents, we assumed the role of compasses in search of pilots. Then came the pull out of Elad, Munzu and Anyangwe from the Yaounde Tripartite Technical Committee after the rejection of their proposals that largely favoured the concerns of the Anglophone people. Naturally as insiders of the ruling elite, Elad, Munzu, Anyangwe (we still do not know what happened to Itoe) needed to tell us their story. We got it from personal contacts and preparatory meetings. But the turning point of our encounter was when we invited Elad, Munzu and Anyangwe as Guest speakers to the launch of my book “Bate Besong, symbol of Anglophone hope” on February 13th 1993 at the Youth and Animation centre Buea. On that occasion, one of the speakers, Asonglefac Nkemleke reminded the audience that we were also commemorating the 60th birthday of President Paul Biya.

The audience cheered. Then Simon Munzu spoke, “it is futile to pay lip service to the progress and welfare of Cameroon without working purposefully towards the achievement of the maximum progress and welfare of its component parts - Anglophone/Francophone”. [Deafening applause] Then Carlson Anyangwe took to the rostrum “A conference of representatives from all over the Southern Cameroons is absolutely necessary now. Should *Republique du Cameroun* attempt to obstruct by force or otherwise the holding of such a conference we should resist”. A standing ovation. The enthusiastic crowd left the hall visibly resolved to join us in “discussing in full freedom, as friends and fellow country –men, the practical and institutional problems of reunion” (Ahidjo).

A few days before the proposed AAC dates, we had not had a hall -*Batasof* hotel was too small considering the flood of positive responses from invitees; University of Buea was unavailable; the staff of Buea Mountain hotel was too paranoid. Dr. Ekiko Francis and myself were delegated to contact the Mount Mary Maternity Centre. How were we going to convince the Reverend Sisters? Indeed, we met quite an Iron lady of a Reverend Sister who only melted into malleability when we told her the truth. We needed the hall for a conference that will bring together the past, the present and the future stakeholders in the Anglophone community.

“Are you serious that Pa Foncha will come?” The Reverend sister asked excitedly. Yes, not only did Pa Foncha come but with him more than five thousand participants to the historic All Anglophone Conference on April 2nd and 3rd 1993. Ten years later, (April 2003), I look back and wonder whether If the deliberations of AAC that are documented in its Draft Federal Constitution and the Buea Declaration and that were formally tabled before the Technical Committee for Constitutional Reforms on 26 May 1993, had been taken seriously by the Cameroon Government, we would not have avoided Federalist doves from becoming secessionist hawks. I wonder whether all of these annual October 1 military sieges and bloodshed would not have been over. I wonder whether Ebenezer Akwanga and his jail mates would not have been free citizens in their country. I wonder whether Gorji Dinka, Justice Ebong, Ebini Atem, Simon Munzu, Carlson Anyangwe and an array of Anglophone brains would not have

preferred our national greener pastures to a foreign golden fleece. I wonder whether President Paul Biya would have still needed to remind us in almost all his speeches about the virtues of National Unity. Yes, I sometimes wonder, but one thing I do know is that whether the Anglophone problem is considered a forgotten scar of our collective memory or an open sore of our collective survival, it will continue to prick the conscience of the Cameroonian body-politic.

Chapter Twenty

Cameroon's Democratic Process: Vision 2020

'A new generation in Africa is within the range of a new vision of the best future Africa is yet to see.' (Jonathan N. Moyo, Minister of Information, Zimbabwe)

The underlying assumption of this essay is that multipartyism has failed in Cameroon not because multipartyism has proven to be an illadapted political model in most of Africa but because the political elite in Cameroon have been unable to provide a vision of a future for Cameroonians and a realistic strategy for achieving it. The essay therefore calls on Cameroonians to see beyond Presidential elections 2004 and to ponder over the question: 'What will Cameroon look like in the year 2020?'

Introduction

It is 2004; Cameroon is in the heat of another multiparty election fever. Since the elections are presidential, the stakes are high and the expectations even higher. Leaders of thought and presidential hopefuls are raising their apocalyptic voices above the din of disillusionment just like it happened in 1992 and in 1997. Since Multipartyism got reintroduced in Cameroon in 1990, Cameroonians have learnt to make do with a presumptuous yet ubiquitous incumbent and an ambitious yet fragmented opposition.

Democratic content

For more than a decade, the goals of multiparty democracy still elude the masses and within the present political context of unbridled demagoguery, multiparty may remain a façade and charade, promising much but delivering little. Many reasons have been advanced for the dismal performance of neo-liberal democracy in Cameroon but let us dwell on just a few.

Lack of democratic will

Cameroon's leadership yielded to democratic pressures (both internal and external) in the early 1990s more out of convenience than of conviction. In his political book *Communal Liberalism*, the incumbent President, Paul Biya, had manifested his apprehension

for multipartyism as he wrote: 'A new generation in Africa is within the range of a new vision of the best future Africa is yet to see.' (Jonathan N. Moyo, Minister of Information, Zimbabwe). The present phase of the history of Cameroon does not permit the institution of a multiparty system. Our Party (Cameroon People's Democratic Movement-CPDM) is therefore responsible for the reduction of the existing ethno-cultural divisions in order to promote national integration... (Biya 1987:127). Hardly had Paul Biya, who took power as President in 1982 from Amadou Ahidjo, settled down to experiment his political thought than the 6 April 1984 aborted military coup jostled his grip on power and the 26 May 1990 launching of another political party (Social Democratic Front – SDF) defied his one party ideology. From May–November 1990, opponents of multiparty politics marched the streets of Cameroon calling those who had dared to upset the apple's cart 'merchants of illusions' and 'enemies of national unity'. This did not stem the tide of internal pressure. As for external forces the then French President François Mitterand believed to have facilitated Biya's accession to power, made a speech at La baule (France) in the direction that African countries should henceforth 'expand their democratic spaces.' Arguably because of Cameroon's legendary servitude to France, the Biya leadership reneged on its initial ideology of one party rule. At the same time the international community was waving the 'stick and carrot' bait to African countries reluctant to swallow multiparty democracy. Prominent among them was the then British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd who said 'those countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for human rights, and market principles, should be encouraged.

But governments which persist with repressive policies... should not expect us to support their folly with the scarce resources which could be better used elsewhere' (*Africa Confidential*: 1991).

With both internal and external pressures on Paul Biya, but without any concrete rules on the exigencies of multiparty politics, without a change of the monolithic constitution, without a defined role of the opposition, without a clear cut line between the party and state and without any referendum, he (Biya) promulgated into law on 19 December 1990, the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in Cameroon (Ngwane 1996:175).

Lack of democratic transition

Patrick Quattrin highlighted several features of the democratisation processes in Africa for over a decade as non-transition, transitions without change, authoritarian rehabilitation and fragile transitions (*CODESRLA Bulletin*, 2002). Cameroon was one of the countries that embarked on a non transition democracy. Either oblivious of or bankrupt in other political models, Cameroon trigger-happily discarded the 'devil' of the one party system to embrace the 'god' of multipartyism. But unlike other African countries, like Benin (1990), Mali (1991), then Zaire (1991) and South Africa (1994) that planned a transition, the leadership of Cameroon resisted any form of democratic transition. Such a context only encouraged the emergence of a new elite in the political arena, next to the old ones who switched over, for the occasion, to the virtues of political pluralism (Tidjani Alou 2002: 28).

The setting up of Constitutional Conferences, Sovereign National Conferences and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as modes of transition was meant to provide new political and economic paradigms suited to the demands of pluralism. As discussion forums, transition modes served as the balm of national reconciliation and catharsis as well as avenues to put in place reforms and structures that would change the quality of lives of the masses. When President Paul Biya therefore declared on 27 June 1991 at the National Assembly that 'Je l'ai dit et je le maintiens, la conférence nationale est sans objet pour le Cameroun' (I insist that a national conference is baseless in Cameroon). Cameroonians were stunned into both rage and revolt. Biya's refusal to yield to popular demand for a national conference was partly due to the opposition parties' misconception of the purpose of such a conference—their perception was not one of overhauling the obsolete monolithic apparatus but one of impeaching and eventually stripping Biya of legitimate power. Cameroonians therefore missed a rare opportunity to reassess the gains of independence and to examine the expectations of a democratic renewal. Instead, Biya offered Cameroonians a Tripartite Conference consisting of the ruling party, the opposition and the civil society. This conference that was held from 30 October – 18 November 1991 proved to be futile as national aspirations became mortgaged on the altar of parochialism.

The main weakness of this conference was the quasiobsessional temptations of the ruling party, which wanted rules and results for its prime benefit alone.

Lack of democratic vision

When the wind of change blew in Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s most countries made the error of aping neo-liberal democracy as if no other innovative and home-grown democratic choices existed. It was as if 'greater democracy' automatically meant multipartyism and multipartyism was seen to be succeeding only if elections were free or fair. Whatever the reason for the emphasis on multiparty election it is misleading and threatening to the process of democratisation in Africa because it trivialises democracy (Ake 2000:150). The Cameroonian experience proves that while the ruling party sees multiparty election as a source of prebend, the opposition supports it as a strategy of power. Each one wants to sustain or inherit the system not necessarily to change it. The over fourteen years of Cameroonian democracy is arguably all about voting without choosing.

Despite these multiparty years, most Cameroonians have had little reason to believe that they are anything other than pawns in a game of chess played by the power elite. The latter set their agendas for the masses, use them (masses) to serve their ends and abandon them to the misery and ignorance to which they are accustomed (Nyamnjoh 2002). By reducing democracy to a historical practice of election and the peddling of compensatory development advantages to the voter, multipartyism only seeks to hold the ordinary citizen in perpetual captivity. To be sure this capture may be sweetened by allurements and material inducements, which underline the contempt and devalorisation of the voter (Ake 2000:170). Indeed, with human development now being replaced with the triumph of peace, the success of Cameroon's multiparty experience lies only in counting up the number of permitted parties as in the medieval manner of counting up the number of angels who can stand on the point of a pin (Davidson 1991). Peace is a means to an end; the ultimate end being development. And so Cameroonians sometimes look back with nostalgia at the Amadou Ahidjo authoritarian years of one party rule, when they enjoyed economic prosperity. According to Milton

Krieger, Cameroonians sustained steady, even (with petroleum's help) buoyant growth in the economy, and sufficient patterns of opportunity in the patronage distribution of their domestic proceeds. There was enough for many Cameroonians to aspire to, if not to attain (Krieger 1994:607). From all indications, the quest for greater democracy in the 1990s in Cameroon was predicated on greater participation in decision-making, greater devolution of power to the regions, greater focus on the Anglophone problem, greater ownership by the population of its natural resources and assets of Independence, greater economic empowerment and greater, fairer and more equal opportunities for any Cameroonian to contest and win any elective position.

Unfortunately, Cameroon like most African countries embraced multipartyism not as a vista of social democracy but as a reversal of fortunes from the dominant ruling party (CPDM) to the sharing of sources of prebends and centres of power to party coalitions in proportion to their political or vocal weight. Lest we forget, Africa is not in short supply of indigenous democratic visions, hence the no-party system in Uganda, the consensual democracy in Swaziland and the new found consociational democracy in Rwanda. Cameroon itself is not in short supply of state persons who can provide a democratic vision that has an organic socio-historical link with the dynamics of its social formations. The problem is that innovative rather than orthodox ideologies are easily met with institutional blockages even from the political parties themselves like Mila Assoute's 'White book' in the CPDM party or the Article 8.2 subversion act in the SDF. The repercussions of the absence of a democratic will, democratic transition and democratic vision on Cameroon's political, social and economic landscapes are as many as they are complex, but let us spell out just a few.

Personalisation of power

Cameroon's present Parliament (2004) is made up of five parties. The CPDM, SDF, Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU), National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) and the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC). The founders of these political parties have remained leaders of their parties since their creation (for the CPDM since 1985 and the rest since 1990). The founders/

leaders have presented themselves as candidates for all presidential elections without first submitting themselves to primary elections within their respective parties. Apart from the SDF that in 1997 was obliged to stage-manage primary elections between the incumbent leader Ni John Fru Ndi and the little-known and Paris-based Chretien Tabetsing, the other parties have acted as if their leaders, Paul Biya (CPDM), Ndam Njoya (CDU), Bello Bouba (NUDP), and Augustine Kodock (UPC) were 'les candidates naturels' and 'Présidents à vie de leur parti' (life presidents of their parties). The lesson one can draw from this is that there is no political culture of alternatives and debate in Cameroon since each founder/ leader has positioned himself to the point of confiscating party powers (Biombi 2001: 5). This tenacity syndrome characteristic of African heads of state does not augur well with those who wish to steer the state of affairs in a new dispensation. Probably the worst form of power confiscation is in Cameroon's state corporations. Some of the barons of these corporations have overstayed their grip on these corporations that they act as if they had no one to render account to. As auditing is a rare feat in Cameroon, the barons parade with state wealth, distribute it in fake philanthropy until the corporations are brought to ruin or to privatisation. It was as if Cameroon was an empire with parastatals looking like personal kingdoms.

This phenomenon of patrimonial and personalised management of public affairs now runs through every facet of the Cameroonian bureaucracy. No one sees his/her office as a civil/state property for which service has to be granted without favours; tribalism, nepotism, laxity and egoism are now at loggerheads with nationalism and patriotism. Public and even the private sectors have openly become racketeering spaces; the law officer on the road, the teacher in school, the nurse in the hospital, the magistrate in court and the typist in the secretariat. Everyone is master and the only boss is God. Civil servants are using the cloak of party loyalty to kill the efficiency of the public service. It must be for this reason that Paul Biya's address to the nation on 31st December 2003 focused on the word 'inertia'. He decried the public service which is plagued by deplorable laissez-faire, laxity and lack of good citizenship. But while the ordinary citizen is an accomplice to this crime, he or she is only drawing inspiration from his/her almighty bosses.

Embourgeoisement of the state

For the most part, the political atrophy and economic malaise Cameroon is facing can be blamed on its political elite. The political elite have failed to squarely and frankly address and redress the problems in Cameroon preferring instead to safeguard their privileges and sinecures. Since President Biya has adopted the seminarist approach of leadership (dwelling on philosophical and abstract rhetorics) unlike Ahidjo's pragmatic approach (dwelling on feasible and concrete projects), since Biya has dwelt on a leadership by proxy with a routine agenda, unlike Ahidjo's leadership by rapprochement with a reform agenda, since Biya's diplomacy is one of distance and discretion, unlike Ahidjo's diplomacy of proximity and presence, the elite in Cameroon have arrogated to themselves the wisdom to interpret every gesture and intention of the President. It is this political elite, which occupy public space; garbed in Biya's effigy, they tell the masses of Biya's messianic achievements and drum support for his eternity in power. They do this knowing that their own survival depends largely on their loyalty to the man and not to the nation or the institutions. It is not about supporting the system wholeheartedly, it is about the benefits that accrue from this hypocrisy. In the end the building of nationhood has been sacrificed on the altar of self-aggrandisement and personality cult. Instead of the political elite being the people's earphone they have become the president's megaphone; instead of the political elite being role models, they alienate citizens and act in their own corporate interest, erecting new ascriptive barriers that limit positive contributions to national life and development (Nsamenang 1992:117).

Until the state of Cameroon recognises that vocal party militancy is not always tantamount to inordinate patriotism; until it recognises that the rent seeking behaviour of the elite has retarded the pace of shared citizenship and national concord, Cameroon's leadership shall never establish a true partnership with a greater number of its human resources—the masses, and democracy is also about numbers. No democracy is as dangerous as one that puts premium on people (elite) with a high consumption capacity over a

people (masses) with a high productive potential. Indeed if the democracy of the elite prevails, Africa would have democratised in form but not in content, and in a way that is largely irrelevant to its social realities (Ake 2000:192).

Pauperisation of the masses

Despite the fact that Cameroon has one of the best endowed primary commodity economies in sub-Saharan Africa, its population remains among the least in human development. In 1993, government slashed civil servants' salaries by 70 per cent and in 1994 the FCFA franc was devalued by 50 per cent. This, according to Clovis Atatah, considerably weakened the buying power of Cameroonians thus jeopardising the chances of a consumer-led economic growth (Atatah 2003:11). This economic crisis has been compounded by the draconian structural adjustment measures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In spite of all the rhetorics about a 5 per cent economic growth and the glorious projections of the IMF, the average Cameroonian is still to witness an economic miracle on his/her dining table. Because of the social and economic dislocation caused by the IMF, Cameroonians find it difficult to send their kids to school. Hospitals are bereft of drugs or, where available, the prices are prohibitively exorbitant.

Despite pious proclamations about alleviating poverty, pauperisation is the order of the day. In short the standards of living are bleak; the future grim (Wache 2003:8). Companies that had a large labour market like ALUCAM, SOSUCAM, SODECOTON, BATA, CIMENCAM are either folding or laying off their workers. The adjustment process has not only reinforced a sharp polarisation between a rich minority and a largely impoverished majority, it has raised concern about the dangers of recolonisation facing the continent (Olukoshi and Laakso 1996: 21). But was Cameroon not in a position to learn from the experiences of other countries which in the throes of economic crisis, resisted the IMF? For example China, Poland and Malaysia are three countries that ignored IMF advice and yet became successful. During the Far East crisis, Malaysia refused to take any IMF loans. Its leadership mapped a national integrated economy and within two years all was well with its economy. President Sam Nujoma of

Namibia is quoted to have boasted that in 13 years as an independent country, 'we have not taken a penny from the IMF and World Bank simply because they (IMF and World Bank) are the imperialists' well-organised machinery to get African cheap labour and raw materials for their economic development' (*New African*, November 2003). Instead Namibia embarks on bottom up development agendas backed by a strong impetus for regional integration. Botswana is a country that has made remarkable social and economic progress since independence in 1966. No country in the world, over a period of more than three decades has had higher growth rates like Namibia. It has 6 billion dollars on its own reserves, free education and health. Botswana's success story is based on first its Vision 2016 framework that was launched in 1996 by the first President Sir Ketumile Masire, then its sound management of its natural resources, fiscal discipline and a planning process that presents development plans with achievable goals. As for Libya its economy remains buoyant in spite of decades of international embargo because of the leader's (Muamar Gadaffi's) vision of participative economics and popular socialism. No doubt Libya is the only country in the world with no debt. Equatorial Guinea is making positive strides in its economy since oil was discovered a couple of years ago. The fallouts of the discovery can be seen in both its human development and especially its transport network. There should be many other countries in Africa linking their endogenous macroeconomic gains with human development but whose bright economic performance does not feature on the Western media simply because they are not Bretton Woods-inspired. These countries may not be complete development models but the reality is that only countries which have their heads in the sky of globalisation and their feet firmly rooted to the grounds of localisation will achieve the long awaited Independence goals. When will Cameroon and the rest of the African countries realise that 'development is endogenous; that it can only come from within society, which defines in total sovereignty its vision and its strategy and counts first and foremost on its internal strengths?' (Lopes 1994:37). As Adebayo Olukoshi rightly observes 'blind adherence to orthodox structural adjustment with the authoritarian political and repressive socio-economic costs which it carries, will

do more harm than good to the cause of democratisation in Africa' (Olukoshi 1998:13).

Why has Cameroon surrendered its economic sovereignty to both the IMF and World Bank on the one hand, and to the phenomenon of aid and privatisation on the other hand? Schools and hospitals are built today with aid from the Japanese and the Chinese – in spite of this goodwill by foreign partners, President Museveni of Uganda remarks that aid has never developed a single African country to the stage of social transformation (*New African*, November 2003). Whether in our democratic option or economic choice, Cameroon seems to implement policies it does not decide. Dependence on external aid and the Bretton Woods institutions can compromise a country's independence leading to what political scientists call 'state delegitimation.' For like Kenneth Kaunda says 'whereas the first round of democratisation was undermined by the strength of the state, the second round is likely to be undermined by its weakness' (*West Africa*, January 1998).

African countries must depend on themselves through home-grown development models and the pursuit of the objectives of the African economic community. When this aid comes in trickles it becomes media hyped that one forgets the comparative reality between aid in Europe and that in Africa. A United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Report 2003 shows that in the year 2000, the European Union's (EU) annual aid to sub-Saharan Africa amounted to \$8 per African person while EU annual daily subsidy to EU cows was \$913 per cow. The case of Japan was even more incongruous. In 2000, Japan's annual aid to sub-Saharan Africa was \$1.47 per African but Japan's annual daily subsidy to its cows amounted to an astronomical \$2,700 per cow (UNDP 2003:155). So on the face of it, one would rather be a cow in Europe than a human being in Africa. As for (flawed) privatisation, it still continues to ravage Cameroon's economy. Assets like electricity, telecommunication, transport and water, gained during independence are being thrown back to colonial managers. The country's second largest employer Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) was forced to release into privatisation one of its largest arm of production-the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE). Only recently the CTE proved that privatisation is about profit not people. On 15 January 2004, CTE laid off 585 workers 'in a bid to

reduce the company's cost of production which had soared to an unbearable level' (*The Post*, 26 January 2004). Cameroon's recognition of its economic dire straits was confirmed when it applied to join the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Experts put the unemployment rate in Cameroon at 25 per cent and more than 50 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Cameroon's Minister for Public Investment and Regional Planning, Martin Okouda, defined poverty in Cameroon as people not having the material or financial resources to satisfy their basic needs (food, housing, health etc); the lack of these essential services in some localities makes not only the individual poor, but also households that would otherwise be able to afford them. Minister Okouda attributes poverty in Cameroon to bad governance, which people put down to corruption, to siphoning off public money, to impunity, to milking public services, to the lack of decentralisation and the unequal distribution of the fruits of growth (*The Courier*, July/August 2002). Yes, it beats all economic logic that a country that is crammed with natural wealth and skilled human resources like Cameroon should be ranked 125 out of 162 by the UNDP's 2001 Human Development Index. The 2003 UNDP report now classifies Cameroon as 'low in human development.' Of what use then is political freedom without economic emancipation? Cameroon's democracy is like its football; much ado about victories little to show in infrastructure. Democracy without development is as useless as winning football trophies, without football stadia.

Beyond Presidential 2004

What all of these comments show is that since 1990 there has been a considerable alienation between the politicians and the people—a gap temporarily closed only during elections. Apart from grotesque manifestations of condescending sympathy to the people (bags of rice, beer and bank notes) and empty slogans of commitment (build roads, schools, hospitals, power to the people) during election campaigns, will the 2004 presidential elections live on a promissory note of a permanent social contract between the politician that only thinks of the next election and people that should be thinking of the next generation? The last few months have been characterised by calls both by the ruling and opposition parties for the population to register their names in the electoral list. The government has

made overtures to the Opposition parties and human rights organisation in selecting the names of future members of the National Election Observatory (as opposed to the Constitutional Council) who will be charged with supervising the presidential elections. If statistics are anything to go by, the already disillusioned electorate may not hearken to these pleas. According to reports by international observers, while about 65 per cent of the electorate took part in the 1992 presidential elections, only 25 percent answered present in 1997 presidential elections (*The Courier*, July/August 2002). These reports see systematic boycott by the opposition, low voter registration, bias in the public media, targeted arrests and electoral fraud as traditional opioids of multiparty elections in Cameroon. According to the researcher, Dr. Mamoudou Gazibo, 'the democratic process in Cameroon is terribly fragmented and riven with conflicts between the dominant party in power and an opposition divided by leadership disputes' (*The Courier*, July/August 2002). Furthermore, the absence of a wide-ranging debate and clearly presented opposition policies saps interest in electoral contests.

The electorate is so dismayed with present politicians on both sides of the divide that voter apathy remains high. Ntemfac Ofege attributes voter apathy to the stark realisation that Mr. Biya will always rig elections and also to the fact that the so-called opposition is full of political illiterates, unprincipled dead beats, who pretend to oppose Mr Biya when they are indeed part of the Cameroon problem (*The Post*, February 23, 2004). Accusations of lack of probity and accountability that have been heaped on the ruling regime seem to have also fallen on some of the local councillors and parliamentarians of the opposition. So what new mechanisms have been put in place to make presidential elections 2004 democracy-friendly and voter attractive? What are the ingredients in the various party manifestoes or politico-economic blueprints that guarantee the electorate that after Presidential 2004, Cameroon will expand its democratic space and redistribute its economic resources?

What are the chances that Presidential 2004 will this time, no matter the victor, reverse the pyramid of power and resources that have long been the preserve of a predatory cartel? The chances are slim and the average Cameroonian voter is tired of being a mere

gesture rather than a partner in the democratic process. Since 1990, Cameroon's democratic process has been like a journey without maps. Prayer sessions and ecumenical services have been done, asking the Almighty God to intervene and save Cameroon. But God's response seems to be 'I will help those who help themselves.' It is about time Cameroonians took a break and chartered a political, social, economic and cultural map that would go beyond presidential 2004 to the year 2020. Cameroon needs not just a political transformation but also a social transformation of its society and economic upliftment of the poor. Unfortunately those who have the power to transform the society do not have the will and those who have the will do not have the power. But one cannot give up because other countries in other continents that lagged behind Africa in economic development are now tigers in world economy. Germany and Japan that were destroyed in World War II came back because of their people (Molua 2003: 4). Cameroon may be losing its Independence assets but it has not yet mortgaged its national soul. It can still strengthen the union of brotherhood (not bondagehood c.f Bole Butake) between all Cameroonians whatever their origin. Cameroon does not need repeated elections whose results are often predictable; what Cameroon needs today is what Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Soludo propose for Africa: a system of democratic governance in which political actors have the space to freely and openly debate, negotiate and design an economic reform package that is integral to the construction of a new social contract (Mkandawire & Soludo 1999:133). Beyond Presidential 2004 therefore is the dire need for a Pax Cameroona Congress that will focus on vision 2020.

All Cameroonian Congress

The aim of this Congress would be to provide Cameroon with a genuine democratic, development and citizenship agenda up to the year 2020. 2020 because it would have marked 30 years of Cameroon's institutionalised democratic process began in 1990. This congress could be held in 2005 marking 15 years of stock taking and giving Cameroonians another 15 years of adequate planning. These 15 years of planning, would be interrupted every five years for comparative analysis. The Congress participants would decide and define what democratic strategies and economic

choices to make in order to attain both the Independence and Millennium Development goals. It would be about reconnecting the political forces and the social forces; I have also had to wonder aloud why this country should maintain the name 'Cameroon'; why should the country continue with a name imposed on it by a group of Portuguese adventurers? Simply because the Portuguese caught and ate a variety of 'crayfish' at the Wouri Estuary was no reason to have a country named after 'crayfish' prawns (cameroes) in Portuguese or in pidgin 'njanga'. Except Cameroonians accept that they are 'njangas', the new dispensation may also demand that the country be given a new indigenous name that spells dignity, integrity and nationalism.

The congress would provide a vision born out of tolerance, moderation, intellectual honesty non partisan consideration and sense of realism with regard to the conduct of public affairs in Cameroon; a vision needed to provide a legal framework and foundation suitable for the construction of a new Cameroonian order. While the 1991 Tripartite conference was too election concerned, the All Cameroonian congress should have a long term and broad-minded goals. The congress must identify the challenges implied by these goals and propose strategies to meet them. Documents abound in Cameroon that have attempted to provide a durable social contract between the rulers and the governed. They may be used as references during this congress. Some of these documents include *The Political Philosophy of Ahmadou Ahidjo*, as told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, *Communal Liberalism* by Paul Biya, National Economic and Social Program (NESPROG) by the SDF, *The White Book* by Mila Assoute, *La crise économique du Cameroun* by Robert Nyom, Proposals from the Coalition for National Reconciliation and Reconstruction, and Front for Alternative Forces. This list is not exhaustive. There are also resource persons that have proposed the way forward for Cameroon either through newspaper articles or other channels.

These personalities need to join other members of the political and civil society and party leaders in the All Cameroonian congress. The initiative to convene such a congress lies on the shoulders of all patriotic Cameroonians. The impetus lies on the incumbent leadership. There has indeed been little dialogue and fair play in Cameroon's multiparty democracy, even in comparison with

most African countries (Nyamnjoh 2002). Cameroon must be one of the few countries in Africa where opposition leaders and members of the civil society have never publicly met with President Paul Biya. It would also be necessary to include a fresh discussion on a new constitution in the All Cameroonian congress. The 1996 constitution and other party proposals may serve as a point of entry. The outcome of this congress therefore would be a document called 'Vision 2020-framework for a long-term vision for Cameroon'.

End note: A new generation

Cameroonians born during or after independence (1960) owe a lot of gratitude to those who fought for the country's independence and who have been at the helm of state affairs since independence. Most of those who were politically active during and immediately after independence did so when they were in the primes of their lives—almost in their thirties. Without the ultimate sacrifice of these nationalists, Cameroon's political agenda would have been completely mortgaged. Thanks to the wisdom and knowledge of those who have so far been in the corridors of power, Cameroon's image of an island of peace in an ocean of conflict is intact. It is an image that must be consolidated with deeper significance. It is therefore a natural design that the old politicians who are mostly above their fifties should start thinking of passing the mantle of leadership to the children of independence who are in their thirties and forties, today.

Amadou Ahidjo born in August 1924 became Premier of Cameroon on 18 February 1958 at the age of 34. Paul Biya born on 13 February 1933 became Prime minister of Cameroon in 1975 at the age of 42 (he had already held the prestigious posts of Director of Cabinet and Secretary General at the Presidency). Ahidjo quit politics at the age of 58, Biya just celebrated his 71st birthday. The charismatic leader of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Ni John Fru Ndi is already in his early 60s, the meticulous leader of the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) Adamou Ndam Njoya is in his 60s, the taciturn leader of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) Bello Bouba Maigari has almost hit 57. One of the longest serving politicians and Secretary General of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) Pa Augustine

Frederick Kodock has attained the ripe age of 80. Their names have been in the lips of the Independence children for over two decades. These politicians have for so long determined the course of this country and should now be serving as torchlights of succeeding generations. Of course, democracy is not about excluding people on the basis of age, it is even more about including people on the basis of ideas. But if one has to go by the UNDP 2001 Report that puts life expectancy for Cameroon at 50 then these politicians need to think about an early retirement to provide a smooth transition of leadership to another generation. Julius Kambarage Nyerere did it in Tanzania exposing young turks like Salim Ahmed Salim to the political limelight. Salim Ahmed Salim was Tanzania's Ambassador to the United Nations at the age of 22. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela did it in South Africa preferring to step down in favour of younger people like Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki. When Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma was asked about prospects of running for a fourth term as President of Namibia he said 'You know I am growing old. Age does not wait for anybody. I am not going to run for a fourth term. I must give the chance to the young people who have the strength to run the country' (*New African*, November 2003). Examples are few because Africa's democracy still resides in the weird policy of gerontocracy. Yet politics is also about knowing when to quit especially as there are now diplomatic opportunities in the African Union and international organizations for those who have had rich diplomatic careers in their countries.

The generation gap is a major political issue in Africa, an issue which hitherto has gone unnoticed, ignored or unanalysed by national and international researchers, opinion makers but the truth is that the oldguard nationalists are increasingly finding themselves out of step with the younger population (Moyo 1998:7). What is incumbent on the old leadership is to stand by the energetic youth. This past-present continuity undoubtedly will provide lessons as the new generation attempts to recuperate the disintegrating mantle of leadership (Chiabi 1997:215). The youths must equip themselves with what I call 'Youth Power'. According to Dibussi Tande, as the laboratory of Africa's democracy, youths should be uncompromising critics of their socio-political environment. They should be instilled with a healthy skepticism towards values that might be accepted blindly. They should adopt a way of thinking that

is contrary to all forms of monolithism without being carried away by the illusions and fantasies of pluralism. They should clearly say ‘no’ to the utopia of the new demagogues wearing borrowed democratic robes (Tande 1992). What I propose for young people who wish to overhaul their rustic democratic machinery is to come back to the strategy of pioneer pan Africanist which is ‘think African, implement national.’ At the national level, youths should create broadbased associations, unions, NGOs and grassroots organizations that only they can control. Addressing grassroots, national and continental problems allows youths to groom themselves towards leadership. This is the time for a new generation in Cameroon to develop leadership skills based on enduring African values (sharing not accumulating), ubuntu philosophy (I am because we are) and respect for the old.

Africa is not only losing its young and virile population to poverty, war and disease but also to Western exodus primarily because the young see the doors of opportunities closed in front of them by politicians whose future is behind them. When indeed will the Cameroonian youths of today be leaders of tomorrow? Far from being a conflict of generation, the rite of passage of the young into power is a complimentary act meant to let the young realize their own dreams. For what indeed is vision 2020 all about? It is about equipping Cameroon with a new dream that would revitalise the economy and reorient the democratic order. Vision 2020 needs new energies and fresh ideas from the Cameroonian youth. But these new energy and ideas will not come from pecuniary associations like PRESBY (President Biya’s Youth) NEDY (New Deal Youths), JACHABY (Jeunesse Active pour Chantal Biya) and a host of windowdressing youth -wing party organisations. Vision 2020 shall be managed by youths who have an independent mind and those who can dare to invent the future. How the present political dinosaurs begin to involve the young political ‘indomitable lions’ in the pursuit of a new Cameroonian order packaged in vision 2020 will determine the success of Cameroon’s democratic process begun more than a decade ago.

Note

This article first appeared as a serial in *The Post* newspaper, April-June 2004. The article was considered “libellous and

unpatriotic” by administrative hierarchy. A month later the author was suspended from his functions as Provincial Delegate for Culture for South West Province. An administrative suspension he served for four years (2004–2008).

References

- Ake, C., (2000) *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Alou, M. T., (2002) ‘Democratic Consolidation and the Future of Democratisation processes in Africa’, *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos 3 and 4.
- Atatah, C., (2003) ‘From Rich to Heavily Indebted Poor Country’, *The Post* Newspaper 7 November, p.11.
- Biombi, A., (2001) ‘Les présidents à vie vous saluent bien’ *Mutations*, 16 juillet, p.5.
- Biya, P., (1987) *Communal Liberalism*, London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Chiabi, E., (1997) *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, Lanham: University Press of America.
- Davidson, B., (1991) ‘What Development Model?’ *Africa Forum*, vol., no. 1.
- Mkandawire, T. and Soludo, C., (1999) *Our Continent, Our Future: African*

Chapter Twenty One

Threshing the Togolese Tangle

The present Togolese crisis could be addressed through one of the many approaches. Let us take a look at three scenarios:

Scenario 1: The Conciliatory approach

Resignation of Faure Gnassingbe and return of constitutional legality. In this case, the Parliament is reconvened and Articles 65 and 144 are restored to pave way for the besieged yet legitimate Speaker of the Assembly, Fambare Ouattara, to become interim President. He organises elections within 60 days.

Scenario 2: The Coercive approach

Opposition parties and the civil society in Togo continue to mount internal pressure, while the African Union and ECOWAS mete out targeted sanctions (impose travel bans, freeze assets etc and suspend Togo from the activities of both organisations as stipulated by Article 30 of the African Union Treaty). All of this to force the powerelite of Togo to return to Scenario 1.

Scenario 3: The Compromise approach

Allow Faure Gnassingbe to create a transition government (including Opposition, ruling and civil society actors), which should last between the years 2005-2006. Within this period, the transition government may take the following steps:

- (a) Set up a broad-based National Dialogue to design a long-term strategic indigenous framework on the political, economic (developmental) and social vision (roadmap) of Togo.
- (b) Review the country's constitution e.g. Article 65 may not entrust power in the Speaker of the Assembly in case of vacancy at the Presidency but in a Vice-President who completes the term of office; limit the Presidential mandate to two terms of five years each; decentralise and devolve power to the Provinces etc.
- (c) Reexamine the democratic model to reflect the country's history and culture; such models include the Umbrella democracy, no party democracy, consociational democracy etc.

- (d) Map out an apolitical and vocational role for the Army (if it is not plausible to abolish the Army and replace it with a citizen-protective security apparatus as in Guatemala). Such vocational role should focus on cooperative economics e.g. Agriculture, road construction, creative arts, skilled labour and sub-regional trade etc.
- (e) Institute either an Independent Electoral Commission or a Coalition Electoral Commission to be charged with the entire management of all elections in 2007 and beyond.
- (f) All those involved in the Transition government including Faure Gnassingbe are barred from standing for the 2007 elections.
- All these steps should be monitored by the Togolese civil society and ECOWAS under the auspices of the Peace and Security organ of the African Union.

Conclusion

While some African leaders like Mandela, Nujoma, Muluzi, Masire, Konare, Chissano have broken the ranks of the *Leadership Tenacity Syndrome* (LTS) in Africa and have shown political maturity and democratic culture in respecting the law of their lands, the Faure phenomenon leaves these achievements in the shadow of constitutional tinkering. Yet, all those involved in settling Togo's stalemate should understand that in conflict transformation there are no fixed positions but fixed interest. Indeed Africa's interest lies in good governance that seeks to improve the quality of the lives of its people.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Africa's Development Problematique (The case of NEPAD)

In July 2001, during the Organisation of African Union summit in Lusaka, Zambia, the New African Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was born. Five years later and given the importance of this new economic paradigm to Africans, it is necessary to revisit and restate some of the predicaments that NEPAD inadvertently put on its way.

First, **the ideological problem.** NEPAD was not necessary. The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) that was adopted in the extraordinary OAU – summit in 1980 was a promissory note for which Africa's economic development was to be improved between 1980 and 2000. Only eleven years later (1991) Heads of State met in Abuja, Nigeria to revise the LPA both in content and strategy and came up with the treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). AEC'S objective was "to promote economic, social and cultural development and the integration of African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and promote an endogenous and self-sustainable development." This objective carries all the ingredients of an economy that is African-inspired, African-driven and African-reliant. This statement conjures the image of "ownership and responsibility" that is embedded in NEPAD.

AEC was to be established in six stages of variable duration over a transitional period not exceeding thirty four years.

Convinced of the relevance of the AEC, the Heads of State met in Yaounde in 1996 to shorten the transitional period to twenty years. Therefore AEC's completion period would have been in the year 2016.

On the 9th of September 1999, a fourth extraordinary session of the OAU was convened by Muammar Gaddafi in Sirte, Libya, at the end of which, the Heads of State "decided to establish an African Union, in conformity with the ultimate objective of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community." In fact the Preamble of the present African Union Charter talks of "the need to accelerate the process of IMPLEMENTING the treaty

establishing the African Economic Community in order to promote the socio economic development of Africa.”

So, from which economic bag did Olesugun Obasanjo, Thabo Mbeki, Abdoulaye Wade and Abdelaziz Bouteflika get their NEPAD? The argument for Africa’s development was not for a new name but for a new impetus; it was not about the failure of AEC but its rapid implementation, it was not about reinventing the wheel, it was about accelerating the AEC process. Africa’s development problematique is not just that of vision it is also one of strategy and action.

Second is **the procedural problem**. The initial name of NEPAD was the New African Initiative (a merger between Mbeki’s Millennium African Renaissance program and Wade’s Omega plan for Africa). It was because of Mbeki’s vision to involve global partners (Western countries and institutions) in funding the economic program that the New African Initiative became NEPAD. The logic for external funding was rooted in the George Marshall plan theory which got the United States to fund countries that had been devastated by the Second World War. Africa had also been a victim of this war and so also needed compensation. Another logic was that Africa had been impoverished by the West through slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism and so needed some form of reparation as an atonement for the economic crime against the African people. It was for these reasons that the proponents of NEPAD first started marketing their product at the G8 summit in Genoa (2002) and Gleneagles (2005), the United Nations Assembly etc. A practical commitment by Western countries has not been forthcoming simply because the West’s relationship with Africa has been more of promises than performance, more of patronage than partnership, more of a global pillage than a global village. In the end Yayeh Jammeh of Gambia had to dismiss NEPAD as a “kneepad for begging “and Thabo Mbeki had to admit that “we will have to rely on ourselves, our own resources and our own efforts.” Mean while NEPAD created an auxiliary organ called the African Peer Review Mechanism whose aim is to enhance African ownership of its development agenda through a system of self-assessment that ensures that policies of African countries are based on best current knowledge and practices. Unfortunately, so far, not more than ten African

countries have submitted themselves to the Peer Review Mechanism.

Third is **the institutional problem**. NEPAD seemed to have been conceived as a parallel autonomous organ to the African Union (AU). Unlike the AEC that was placed under the control of the AU, NEPAD has its own steering and implementation committees. Even within NEPAD the old personality rivalries and the obnoxious linguistic sensitivities remain perceptible among the proponents.

Fourth is **the ownership problem**. NEPAD is disconnected from the very people for whom it is intended. Yayeh Jammeh made a point that NEPAD ought first to be a partnership between African Leaders and their people. The author Richard Joseph says partnership among Africa's diverse peoples and between government and their societies would create firmer bases than that promoted externally.

Yet in spite of the March 2002 Abuja NEPAD summit which called for "greater efforts at popularizing and marketing NEPAD among all African countries in a manner that involves the leadership and the various segments of the African society, including women and youth organization", NEPAD remains an intellectual exercise in the minds of the founding fathers. Political parties for their part have their focus on elections. The example set by China with its present economic growth rates around 10 per cent shows that only when the people are involved in an economic reform can development take off. The Dag Hammarskjold Foundation goes further and explains that development is endogenous, "it can only come from within society, which defines in total sovereignty its vision and its strategy, and counts first and foremost on its internal strengths and cooperating with societies that share its problems and aspirations." In other words development will be attained when Africans realize they are the ones going to achieve it. The truth is that African people are prepared to make sacrifices if they are guaranteed that their contribution will open geographical space for the free movement of people, good and capital instead of the clandestine movement of rebels, guns and bombs.

Lastly, **the leadership problem**. The actions and inertia of African leaders towards NEPAD prove that they do not believe in

developmental decisions they take on behalf of Africa. Claude Ake once wrote “They (leaders) are saddled with a strategy that hardly any of them believes in and that most of them condemn. Lacking faith in what they are doing and caught between their own interests, the demands of their external patrons, and their constituents, African leaders tend to be ambivalent, confused, prone to marginalize development and even their role in its pursuit.”

Instead of implementing innovative and inward – orientated strategies of development like the AEC, African leaders choose to pursue the policies prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organisation and the recolonization policy of privatization by Western multinationals. Joseph Stiglitz (former chief economist of the World Bank) says “countries that have succeeded in the recent past have ignored IMF advice; those who have failed have followed it.

Conclusion

History has shown that each time the African continent has proposes endogenous solutions to its problems, industrialized countries have by the carrot or the stick talked African leaders into participating in a global political economy where they (African leaders) come out as reactive agents, economic slaves and neocolonized political entities.

Having embraced NEPAD since July 2001, and before some other Heads of State hatch another buzz word, what magic wand would transform leaders from intellectual philosophers to practical implementers? Whether it is LPA, AEC or NEPAD, the major agenda of popular economic struggles in Africa is based on forcing states to further self-centred development and promote regional integration. This means making our priorities correct and some of them include agriculture, road infrastructure, an African passport, African currency, African media, human development (health trade education), and intra-African trade. Seminar, summits and forums on Africa’s development have been so belabored that action has been compromised. We do not talk about development; we know it when we see it. Civil society has the means (if it is organized) to help focus Africa’s development especially in the areas of transport, communication and agriculture. This means, youths, women, non-state actors, and activist elements of the civil

society should reject their complacency and self-defeat and initiate regional networks that respond to the objectives of any development theory. If NEPAD as economic label were to disappear today and this cannot be ruled out given that its proponents like Obasanjo shall leave power in 2005, Mbeki shall leave power in 2009, Wade is contesting elections in 2007 and Bouteleflika is preoccupied with his health, then the African Union in tandem with the African people must reclaim the contents of LPA/AEC/NEPAD. This can be done following the Asian example, by making democratic entitlement permanent, by taking seriously rich scholarly contributions and by setting up an African development Trust Fund that shall involve contributions from Diaspora Africans.

Note

This essay appeared in *INSIGHT newsmagazine* No. 003: May 2003, in *Africa Notes newsletter* (U.S.A) November/December 2003 and in *The African Nation newspaper* (U.S.A) July 2006

Chapter Twenty-Three

Africa and the Neocolonial Development Mirage

“We will have to rely on ourselves, our own resources and our efforts”

Thabo Mbeki

The United Nations summit of 14 – 16 September in New York has ended without the agenda of Africa’s development occupying central debate.

Like the media – hyped G8 summit of 6 – 8 July on Debt Relief in Gleneagles; Scotland, the UN Summit once again derailed the focal issues of the Millennium Development Goals (universal Primary Education, eradication of poverty, gender equality, reducing child mortality, environmental sustainability, fight against disease etc) in favour of reforms of the United Nations, and definitions of terrorism. Established in September 2000, the Millennium Development Goals provided an economic vision that would ensure that poverty is reduced by half by the year 2015. Ten years before 2015, economic experts are already predicting that these goals will not be met as many countries (12 out of the 18 countries are from Africa), have already fallen off track. Only the Mauritius Island and Botswana stand head high in Africa. Economic experts lay the blame on the inequitable character of world trade and the dismal governance and development orientations imposed on Africa leadership, by Western multinational establishments. Africa’s leadership has compounded an already bad situation through its prebendal governance, liberalised autocracies kleptomaniac economies, frivolous electioneering expenditure, and intellectual persecution. Therefore, most of the people who attended the just ended UN summit are more of the problem than solution to Global Poverty.

African leaders are still to draw a line between African real economies and neocolonial economy. If our leaders have to pursue the paths of structural and human developments, they must focus on development models inspired by indigenous impetus and self-reliance rather than follow the desiderata of Washington, Bruxelles and Paris.

It is no secret that Africa's Independence Development Goals which include road infrastructure, access to health facilities, educational system and a sustainable agricultural policy have been weakened by pontifications decreed by the Bretton Woods Institutions. Structural Adjustment Programs, Enhanced structural adjustment Facility, Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative and the litany of buzz words imperialist experts continue to invent have all tended to increase the poverty status of the average African. Joseph Stiglitz (former chief economist of the World Bank) stunned the world when he admitted that countries that have succeeded in the recent past have ignored International Monetary Fund (IMF) advice and those who have followed it have failed. As I am writing, more than 20,000 people are in the streets of Abuja lambasting IMF policy in Nigeria. Obscene capital flight, unbridled embezzlement, brazen corruption and barefaced unpatriotism have made the lives of many Africans to remain highly deficient. It is in response to this state of affairs that African leaders, in July 2001, conceived the economic package called New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and its governance outfit called African Peer Review Mechanism. It was Africa's recognition that the relationship between the West and Africa was more of promises than performance, more of patronage than partnership, more of hand – out than hands on and more of global pillage than global village, that necessitated the change from the O.A.U to a stronger African Union. For the African Union to hold its own, and for the African people to see its economic benefits, African countries must go back to the economic drawing board where the state takes its responsibility as an agent of development. So far and especially with the resurgence of political liberalization in Africa, African states have lost the legal means to regulate economic factors in a development programme and to give a planned national vision to economic life. Seminars, summits and fora on Africa's development have been so belaboured that palpable action has been compromised. Carlos Lopes (UNDP staff) admits that we do not talk about development; we know it when we see it for development is a lived experience. If development is to be spread in our national spaces, the state must intervene in Introspective Planning. According to Amadou Ahidjo, Introspective planning

expresses our concern for rationally using the available resources, reducing the part of chance in the economic venture and deliberately orienting development towards calculated and predetermined targets. This, arguably, accounts for Cameroon's macro-economic success during the Ahidjo years of a five-year development plan. It is this kind of Introspective planning that accounts for the success story in Botswana, Uganda and Libya.

Here is the place to say and this is a pressing invitation that Agriculture ought to be given greater concern in Africa. But what Agriculture? Hear Paul Biya "Our agriculture has for a very long time been unstable because the colonial masters gave all their attention to export crops (coffee, cocoa, cotton) to the detriment of food crops which were of interest to the local people only. Today, agriculture requires that we balance the assistance given to these two types of crops particularly encouraging the development of large scale food crop farms. In this way, it will not only be a question of reinforcing our food self-sufficiency but also one of meeting the needs of an already existing regional and sub-regional market". To attain this food self-sufficiency, African governments need to subsidise farmers as it obtains in the West, encourage autocentric Industrialisation, provide farm to market roads, put their natural resources at the doorsteps of their own people and focus on a productive capacity of appropriate technology rather than a consumption appetite of advanced technology. Is the maxim producing what we consume and consuming what we produce not still relevant today?

Our colonial educational legacy remains an embarrassing cog in the wheel of African development mainly because our schools are mere copy-cats of Western education. We need creative education – one based on vocational /technical training; one based on skills not just knowledge; one that equips our students with the weapon of self-employment. Our Governments should link 40 per cent of urban dwellers to 60 per cent of rural masses through effective governing decentralisation or local governments. Without this, the gains of economic growth will never be felt at the bottom of the national pyramid. Pompous reforms that provide our predatory elites with bloated luxuries and privileges to the detriment of an equitable redistribution service have only widened the chasm between economic princes and economic paupers. Africa's medical record is

dismal with malaria, typhoid, meningitis and tuberculosis still rife. While these diseases can be combated by state subsidy and a higher citizen purchasing power, AIDS still remains a holocaust with 26 million Africans ostensibly living with HIV virus. No disease has entirely depended on Abstinence and Faithfulness for its control. A vaccine mentality should work in tandem with the virus propagation. The greatest harm Neocolonialism has done to us is to distort our economic minds into believing that modernisation is tantamount to Development. Basil Davidson (British journalist/Africanist) argues that failures and futilities have occurred within a specific context of the attempt to develop Africa out of the history of Europe or America and primarily for the benefit of Europe and America rather than out of the history of Africa for the prime benefit of Africa. The objective of any development is to improve various aspects of living conditions. Development must furnish society with the means of offering man the conditions for living a full life. The UN Human Development Report corroborates this theory every year. Doris Ross (IMF mission chief for Cameroon) is on record for saying that the completion point is not what Cameroonians should focus on. They should rather focus on Cameroon's future. In other words Doris Ross is urging Cameroonians to formulate a homegrown development reality that transcends the elixir called "completion point". Is Doris echoing the same sentiments I expressed in my "Vision 2020" article and for which I still enjoy administrative suspension? Or is a white truth better than a black one? And so, when our various countries achieve national successes in development, then intra-African trade and the Africa common market will now gain momentum. This is the only way the African Union will achieve what it stipulates in Article 3(k) of its constitution and which reads "to promote cooperation in all fields of human activity in order to raise the living standards of African people". The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation advises that development can only come from within society which defines in total sovereignty its vision and its strategy and counts first and foremost on its internal strengths. Civil society (if it is organised and perceived by governments as partners) has the means to help focus Africa's development. This means scholars, non-state actors and activist elements of the civil society should reject their complacency and self-defeat and propose practical endogenous economic paradigms

that respond to viable economic development. Africa is not in short supply of strategist leaders but if these leaders insist on disconnecting with their own people to pursue a futile partnership and international posturing with neo-colonial economic platitudes then the homegrown economic vaccine needed to stop the virus of neo-colonial development mirage will continue to elude us. The result is that every UN Human Development Report will remain a permanent doom and gloom prophecy in the history of Africa's human poverty index.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Going Global

The central theme of the Africa-France Summit (which took place in Yaounde from 17-19 January 2001) was to discuss how prepared Africa is for globalisation.

Bala Usman, a renowned Nigerian political scientist, defined globalisation as 'an empty political cliché with a neocolonial outfit'. His compatriot, Tade Akin Aina, declared globalisation as a new phase of capitalist expansion, focussed on exploitation, accumulation, inequality and polarisation.

In its most basic form, Sengalese writer, Demba Moussa Dembele, regards globalisation and structural adjustment programmes as being among the main instruments of the West's recolonisation strategy of the African continent.

The concept 'globalisation' can be traced back to the 1970s. It was during that time that some European scholars developed the concept of the 'New International Division of Labour' - essentially, the concept refers to large-scale companies in developed countries exporting more of their production to less developed countries, thereby taking advantage of the lower labour costs. While this happened, developed countries remained at the centre of these international companies, due to their advanced position in communication and transport (*CODESRIA Bulletin* 1997). Eurocentric discourses on globalisation have focussed on its advantages *vis-a-vis* Africa. Apologists say globalisation would fight inflation and secure financial stability through liberalised economies. They maintain that through observing the rules of open trade, fair competition and unfettered capital movements, globalisation is potentially the most effective way to end world poverty and spread the benefits of modernisation throughout the world.

On the other hand, Pan African scholars argue that due to the harsh realities of unequal exchange, income polarisation between developed and developing countries, and the continued deterioration of developing countries with regard to trade, neo-liberal globalisation is an illusory concept. Weakened economic control - due to the policies of the IMF and the World Bank within the framework of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) -

will give globalisation the impetus to confine Africa as the supplier of raw materials and commodities, and the consumer of manufactured goods from developed countries. Consequently, this means that globalisation will more than likely increase the income gap between the developed North and the less developed South. In fact, the 1999 United Nations (UN) Human Development Report revealed that a fifth of the world's people are living in the highest income countries and enjoy 86 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 82 per cent of the world's export markets, and 68 per cent of the world's direct foreign investment. Meanwhile, the bottom fifth - mainly the poorest countries in Africa - has about one percent in each sector. The report further highlights the wealth gap by stating the fact that the richest 200 people in the world have a net worth of US\$1,032 billion - equivalent to the income of 41 per cent of the world's population (*AFRICA Today* 1999).

This inequality, according to columnist Tunde Obadina, reflects a stark reality of life in our globalised world - wealth tends to generate more wealth, poverty breeds poverty. How does one reconcile this paradox of African poverty when, in addition to its reservoir of human resources, our continent has 97 per cent of the world's chrome reserves; 85 per cent of the world's platinum reserves; 64 per cent of the world's manganese reserves; 25 per cent of the world's Uranium reserves and 13 per cent of the world's copper reserves (without mentioning bauxite, nickel and lead); 20 per cent of the world's oil trade; 70 per cent of the world's cocoa production; one-third of the world's coffee production and 50 per cent of the world's palm produce. (Organisation of African Unity O.A.U handbook). In spite of all these riches, Africa has 34 of the 48 poorest countries of the world... Eh Eh Africa! Debt cancellation, or admission into Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), have not proven to be economic antidotes for Africa's debt burden. Furthermore, what global solitariness are we talking about in a world that knows no morality? In addition, why has black Africa, which accounts for about 26 million HIV patients, been refused affordable generic drugs? While we have broken the silence on AIDS, Western pharmaceutical laboratories have not broken the drug production monopoly for this pandemic. For example, Pfizer (a French pharmaceutical company) sells Fluconazole sells it at

FCFA 6200 a capsule in South Africa, while its generic is sold at FCFA 813 in India and FCFA 325 in Thailand (*Jeune Afrique Economie*, September 2000). In other words, while the least affected countries have access to capsules, the hardest hit (in Africa) have access to condoms. Where is the global justice in AIDS research, when medical practitioners (hail Professor Anomah Ngu) and traditional healers are refused recognition for their findings?

Owing to the blatant double standards in globalisation, African leaders and scholars have been trying to circumvent it by proposing concrete Pan African agendas. Various resolutions and declarations adopted by African heads of states in Algiers in September 1968, and in Addis Ababa in August 1970 and May 1973, stress that the economic integration of the continent is a prerequisite for the realisation of the OAU's objectives. Successive declarations, such as the Monrovia Declaration (July, 1979), the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991), have been adopted to promote economic, social and cultural development to integrate African economies, thereby increasing economic self-reliance and promoting an endogenous, self-sustained development (OAU handbook). Weh! African leaders! Do you always remember what you sign? Then, in 1999, Muammar Gadaffi relived the dream of Kwame Nkrumah, Lumumba, Cheik Anta Diop and Sankara - the dream of a continental village by way of an African Union. The Act has already been signed by 35 countries, and four national assemblies have already ratified it (President Biya assured the nation, during the Africa-France press conference, that Cameroon would soon sign and ratify it). Hopefully, the African Union will be a force to be reckoned with by next year.

It is only logical that African leaders continue with this coherent and collective strategy, aimed at defending the basic interests of Africans. In his book, *Communal Liberalism*, President Biya cautioned Africans to be aware of the fact that a disunited Africa could not hope to change anything within the world order. Cameroon needs to muster all its force, so as to contribute to the strengthening of African unity at the continental, regional and sub-regional levels. Without an African Union, Africa will remain marginalised and exploited, mere pawns in the global game. In the end, instead of being a member of the global village, Africa will

become a victim of global pillage. Europe has had its European Union. It must now allow Africa to have its own African Union - then we can both sing the global song. African leaders must break away from the 'herd' mentality that makes them followers of another's path. Instead, they should be 'blazers of their own trails'.

It is against this backdrop that the Africa-France Summit could arguably be seen as a distraction from the ideal of an African Renaissance, which was gathering huge support during the Lome OAU 2000 summit. The Africa-France Summit was also a neocolonial sabotage to the advancement of the African Union ideal designed to usher Africa into the third millennium. Yes! Whenever the African people try to reclaim their vision of unity and intra-Africa trade, whenever we attempt to reassert our unshakable survival strategy as a continent, the West (in connivance with their African quislings) transforms our collective symphony into a jangling cacophony of self-interest. But for how long? Should we face these betrayals by resigning to fate and leaving our destinies in the hands of those who continue to sabotage our development? Independence, where are you? (Manu Dibango) Why is it - to paraphrase Michael Odhiambo - that a continent which, 41 years ago, appeared poised for a quantum leap into development and modernisation, suddenly started slipping into the doldrums of hopelessness and despair? The answer lies in a crisis of leadership and the weakness of Africa's civil society. Nonetheless, the idea of an African Union is evolving and growing. From the west coast of Ghana, to the eastern shores of Tanzania, the echoes of greater economic integration and continental unity can be heard. Multi-party democratic futilities and misguided economic policies are the last dark comedies of an Afro-pessimistic century. The new century in Africa will be characterised by three 'D's'- Decolonisation, Democratisation and Development. These goals will not be achieved via decisions made in Washington, New York, Paris, Brussels or London. They will be achieved by building a new and united Africa. Only as a united continent, can Africa restore its role 'as an active player on the world stage, and a leading participant in building a pluralistic and progressive world civilisation'. Is Africa listening?

Chapter Twenty-Five

The African Woman

1^{5th} October 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the death of the pan African icon and the maverick leader of Burkina Faso Captain Thomas Isidore Noel Sankara.

In one of his fiery oratories addressed to the Burkinabe women during the International Day of the woman on 8th March 1987, Captain Sankara said “the genuine emancipation of women is that which entrusts responsibilities to them and involves them in productive activity and in the different struggles the people face”.

As the world pays lip service today 15th October to the rural woman by commemorating what has been pompously called the International day of the rural woman, it behoves Africa to speak to the interwoven tapestry that binds the African woman to her bonded society.

African woman, who are you? Are you a product of your own traditional evolution or an imitation of Eurocentric images? What values do you uphold? Those that maintain our strong African solidarity or those that pursue the blind alley of separate and individual advancement?

African woman, are you still the woman that Leopold Senghor describes as “clad in your black colour which is life/ your beauty strikes me to the heart /as lightning strikes the eagle?

Are you still the one who majestically ploughs the farms; replenishes the energy when we flag and ruin the entire humanity?

Are you still the nightingale who sings the lullaby when the world is still snoring?

Yes, my African woman you remain to us the cradle of African civilization and the fertility of your womb shall be as perennial as the River Nile.

You are Makeda of Sheba of Axum, you are Dahlia Al Kahina who gave Arab invaders fierce resistance when they sought to snatch our land, you are Yaa Asantewa, you are the spirit medium Nehanda, you are Amina conqueror of Kano, Nupe and Katsina, you are Idia Queen, mother and daughter of Africa; indeed you are Sumediang, the Eve of my own civilisation. Stand up and be counted not just as one who attended Beijing but one who speaks

in the face of human greed; as one who fights against the unequal distribution of our resources; as one who stands by the flag of the United States of Africa.

Tell the IMF and the World Bank that their economic strangulations have turned your husbands into beggars in paradise.

Tell the African man to turn his gun into a spade and his military truck into a tractor so together we can build a confidence-prone and conflict-proof Africa.

Appeal to our traditional leaders to eradicate those customs that hold you in perpetual servitude. Tell our political leaders to provide enabling governance that knows neither party symbols nor ethnic colours but one that truly weds to the lyrics of anthem and constitution.

As the rural woman continues to feed posterity let us all sing the songs of democratic development using our own ebony voices, let us in own hieroglyphics write the cultural history of our heroes and sheroes; let us with own tam tam play the beats of our collective African hood.

And like the great Sankara once said “May my eyes never see and my feet never take me to a society where half the people are held in silence. I hear the roar of women’s silence. I sense the rumble of their storm and feel the fury of their revolt. I await and hope for the fertile eruption of the revolution through which they will transmit the power and the rigorous justice issued from their oppressed wombs.”

Yes, African woman, this is your hour but let each second tick with the words of our ancestors *Nkosi sikeleli Africa*.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Gender-based violence in Africa

Introduction

8th March 2007 marked the 30th anniversary of the International Women's Day. Established in 1977 by the United Nation, this important day provides an opportunity to celebrate the progress made to advance women's rights and to assess the challenges that remain. This year's theme is "*Ending Violence against Women: Action for Real Results* with the Cameroonised adaptation being "*Violence against women, Break the silence, take action.*" The theme reflects the forms of marginalization, discrimination, persecution, victimization and exclusion, women in Africa have experienced since the Beijing Conference of 1995 became a media-hyped benchmark. Many International legal instruments on human rights prohibit discrimination against specific groups, in particular women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for example, obliges state parties to pursue by all appropriate means a policy of eliminating discrimination against women. It obliges state parties to take action against the social causes of women's inequalities, and it calls for the elimination of laws, stereotypes and prejudices that impair women's well-being. In the main, I have categorized gender-based violence into socio-cultural, socio-economic and social-political forms.

Socio-cultural form

This includes forms of violence that are entrenched in our traditional customs and cultural values systems in most part of Africa. Based on an indigenous cultural perception of governance and externalized cultural interpretations, socio-cultural forms of gender-based violence have had resistance from conservative traditionalists over the years. Paradoxically among these traditionalists are rural aged women who regard advocates of change as brainwashed female elite pandering to the ethos of globalization without recourse to historical dialectics. The traditionalists and "progressives" perceive socio-cultural construct of violence as a conflict between Afro-centric value system versus Eurocentric stereotypes, ritual initiations versus human right

violation, culture versus torture and beneficial belief systems versus barbaric cultural practices. Some of these socio-cultural modes of violence include Female Genital Mutilation or Female Circumcision, domestic violence (spouse battering), property grabbing (inheritance deprivation), early forced marriages, female infanticide, son preference, dowry prices etc.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is an age-old practice simply because it is customary. It involves the mutilation of the female genital organ as a rite of passage to womanhood, a way of combating female sex appetite and infidelity even if it has been argued that the practice imposes on women and the girl child a catalogue of health complications and untold psychological problems. Female Genital Mutilation is known to be practiced in at least 27 countries in Africa. A UN Report estimates that about 20 percent of women in Cameroon go through a form of FGM called Infibulation. For the past three years alone, about 600 women have been mutilated in Manyu division of the South West Province of Cameroon. The Logone and Chari region in the Far North Province also comes to sharp focus in this practice. It is therefore laudable that the Vice President of the National Assembly Mrs. Rose Abunaw has been leading a crusade with other female Parliamentarians in Cameroon to legislate against this practice. A civil society association called AFRICAphonie has just released a tele-film on FGM and other civil society groups continue engaging traditional and administrative opinion leaders in discussions on these socio-cultural forms of Gender-based violence in Africa.

Socio-economic form

This involves violence or persecution emanating from poor service delivery and biased resource allocation. Lack of adequate policies on health, education infrastructure and agriculture has affected the bulk of the population in Africa. And since 52 percent of this population constitute the women folk it has given rise to what is now called the “feminization of poverty”. By neglecting the agricultural sector, most African governments fail to improve the performance of the agro-food supply chains (farm to market roads, subsidized farm incentives, local consumption etc) and women who are largely concentrated in the rural areas become grossly marginalized. African governments have lost their economic sovereignty to the

IMF and World Bank with the nefarious consequences being felt on women's needs. The role of the Bretton Wood institutions in stifling local economic space has resulted in the labour power of women being appropriated in the process of capital accumulation. Women constitute 60 per cent of the labour force in agriculture in Africa. In specific country cases Niger's women represent 97 per cent of the labour force, Burkina Faso's women represent 91 per cent and Cameroon's women represent 93.5 per cent of the labour force. How then does one expect the largest percentage of our agricultural labour force to yield enough produce if they are so disadvantaged? In fact even though women contribute up to 70 percent of their local and national economies, they receive less than one-tenth of the world's income. Fortunately NGOs are providing income-generating activities and other financial services that benefit women.

Access to education by women still remains a great challenge with the result that it deprives them of information and economic independence. Two thirds of the World's 960 million illiterate people are women. The literacy rate for the women in Niger is 7 per cent while that of Burkina Faso stands at 9 per cent.

Lack of affordable health care delivery systems, drinking water and sanitation especially in the rural sector constitutes institutional violence against women. The average maternal death in Africa per 100,000 stands at 880, with countries like Sierra Leone shooting up to 1800 and Rwanda at 1600. Cameroon had recorded a relative drop in maternal death because of the favourable health policy meticulously pursued by the indefatigable Health Minister Olangue Awono. Unfortunately taxes imposed on even petty business community (championed by women) compromises Cameroon's economic policy based on national ownership. Ministries of Women's Affairs have been created to cater for women rights and benefits in Africa, but budget allocation is a dismal failure when compared to that of the Ministry of Defence.

Socio-political form

This involves violence or discrimination resulting from unbalanced political representation and bad governance.

Women make up half of the world's population yet they account for only 5 to 10 per cent of formal leadership positions

world wide. In Africa, 8 percent of women are in parliament and 7 percent in Ministerial leadership. In Sub Saharan Africa, representation of women in the Lower House, as of 2005, stood at 14.9 per cent while that of the Senate was 14 percent. So far only two countries in Africa (Rwanda – 48 per cent and South Africa – 30 per cent) have hit the 30 per cent target of women representation in political institutions as prescribed by the 1995 Beijing Conference. Seychelles with 27 per cent, Mozambique with 25 per cent and Namibia with 22 per cent constitute the success story of affirmative action policy, women pressure groups carry out in Africa, to advance women representation in sites of political power. None the less it has been advanced that the greatest strategy for creating women's presence in politics is through Proportional Representation System or Quotas. There is the party informal quota that stipulates that 30 percent of the candidates on the party's list must be women and there is the statutory quota or reserved seats for women enshrined into some national constitutions or national electoral laws-. This is the case for example in Uganda, Eritrea and Tanzania where 15 percent out of the 255 seats are reserved for women in the Parliament. In Zambia, a national policy on gender places the quota for representation for women in political structure at 30:70 per cent ratio. In Cameroon, the Deputy Coordinator for the Good Governance Program, Mrs. Lydia Effimba tried in vain during the 2004 Presidential elections to convince parties to include women-friendly issues on their party programmes.

While this quota system enables women to break the patriarchal power, it is civil society groups that can pressurize women leaders to abandon the masculine model of predatory politics and seek to improve the quality of life for women and men. Hence capacity building forums on leadership politics, campaign skills, public speaking/communication skills and campaign support funds for women aspiring to political office are very vital. Having said this, the fundamental question is whether political participation results in the improvement in the quality of life for women and whether the quality of governance improves when women participate in politics. This depends on the definition women and especially feminists in development male of what is called “the Empowerment model”. The Empowerment model, according to Moser, seeks to identify power less in terms of domination over

others and more in terms of the capacity women need to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength. Bad governance has led not only to social dislocation in most African countries but has inadvertently contributed to large scale protracted conflicts and wars that make Africa the open sore of the world. Statistics show that women are often the victims of these wars as they assume the status of refugees, sexually-abused victims and widows.

Conclusion

Gender roles have always been well defined and firmly entrenched in African traditional society. Beijing did not arrive to confront but to engage discussions on gender relations in the household and in the public sphere. African women voices would be resonant if women consider their male counterparts as partners rather than hurdles in the journey to women development. Women advocacy would remain more relevant if 8th March is seen not as an event but a project; the International Women's Day would be meaningful if it is celebrated as a life-service balm needed to heal the wounds of all forms of marginalization including those that are women-specific. Yes, 8th March would have justification if women commemorate the day as an introspective tool to assess the damage caused on women growth both by externalized bondage-hood created by others and internalized victim-hood created by women themselves. And so while global women commemorate 8th March as the International Women's Day, let all African Women not forget that 31st July represents the Day of the African Woman as prescribed by the OAU/African Union. For indeed the mission of the African woman is two-pronged – advocating corrective mechanisms in the various institutionalized exclusionist and conspiracy practices of gender-based violence in Africa, and also seeking therapies to the cancer of African citizen-centred violence that has placed Africans at the bottom of the human development pyramid.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Cultural Unification Identified as Instrument of African Unity

Interviewed by Walter Wilson Nana (The Post Newspaper)

Civil Society Cultural Advocates and enthusiasts of African Culture have prescribed cultural unification as a pertinent instrument for African unity. This was amongst a series of ideas churned out at the just ended **Cultural international conference** in Sun City, South Africa. According to George Ngwane, who was party to the conference, Africans frowned at the corrosive effects of globalisation on indigenous culture. He talked about more of his South African sojourn with The Post:

What was the Cultural Diversity for Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development Conference all about?

It was a one-week conference (September 11-15) on Cultural Diversity for Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development that brought together more than 70 cultural professionals from Africa and the Diaspora.

The theme of the conference reflects the on-going process by member states of UNESCO and civil society cultural agents to examine and ratify UNESCO's convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, which was adopted at the 33rd session of UNESCO General Conference in October 2005.

Thanks to the Musa Heritage Gallery, I was invited to a similar function in Dakar, Senegal, November 2005, to join in the debate on how cultural diversity impacts on human development, poverty alleviation and local craft production.

You highlighted UNESCO's convention on the protection and promotion of cultural expression. What does it address?

The convention has great implications for the whole of the developing world in particular. It highlights the need for national governments to develop a coherent policy for cultural industries and to synergise its approaches within the appropriate ministries involved in creative entrepreneurship.

In this regard, a liaison between ministry of culture and ministry of trade, culture and education, culture and tourism, culture and external affairs need to be reinforced. The convention seeks to provide measures needed to balance the current imbalances in the trade of cultural products and also to enhance capacity building for areas of the cultural sector in the developing world.

Personally, I regard Article 4, 1-3 of the convention as being extremely significant to Africa because it recognises oral tradition, heritage and indigenous knowledge system as part of cultural capacity. This is very important to some of us who decry the corrosive effects of globalisation on our indigenous culture.

What did you come out with at the Sun City conference?

We were able as civil society actors, government departments and isolated cultural practitioners to lobby for the establishment of national cultural policies in our respective countries. What this implies is that countries would have to convene all partners in the cultural sector to a kind of forum.

In the case of Cameroon, such a forum was convened in August 1991. Paradoxically, culture was fused in the then Ministry of Information and Culture. The August 1991 forum produced a laudable and ambitious cultural roadmap with elements like a support scheme for artists, creation of associations for artists and the annual organisation of festival of arts and culture.

The Ministry of Culture needs to convene another national forum on culture, to assess the grounds covered since 1991 and more. Especially to address in a more holistic manner the issues of building sustainable local creative industries, training of socio-cultural actors, establishing a private-public contract to fund local cultural projects, revamping the role of cultural policy officers in our embassies and reviving the moribund national commission for UNESCO in Cameroon.

The South African Department of Arts and Culture, National Commission for UNESCO and University of South Africa have created a transcontinental platform of Africans and the Diaspora that will, hopefully, develop a common position on issues like bilateral partnerships on cultural diversity and regional strategies and the role of culture in effecting social cohesion, human rights, democracy and social justice.

How do you intend to inject the aforementioned ideas into the Cameroonian society?

I was invited in my capacity as civil society cultural advocate and it would only be appropriate for me to forge linkages with other culture-oriented organisations in Cameroon. The vogue, even before the UNESCO Convention in 2005, is to create coalitions or networks for cultural diversity in most countries.

Peter Musa of Musa Heritage heads the Cameroonian coalition. These coalitions then engage their governments into the different roles, partners, who ensure a harmonised and coordinated national policy on culture, sensitisation, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention.

It will be ideal for the Cameroonian case for development partners to sponsor a forum on cultural diversity that will examine and disseminate the tenets of the convention.

What is the way forward?

Some one described culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and this has been recognised by the UNESCO Convention, AU, NEPAD and Art Moves Africa. But the successes of these global or continental cultural charters depend on the integration of national and sub regional cultural policies.

Cultural unification is a vital instrument for African unity. Hence, the urgency for countries and more so African countries to follow the example of Togo, Madagascar, Mauritius and Djibouti in ratifying the UNESCO Convention and establishing the structures identified in it.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

George Ngwane: The Independent Intellectual

(Original published in *Post Newsmagazine*)

Mwalimu George Ngwane is a man of many parts. Writer, poet, peace activist, educationist, political analyst, pan-Africanist, and Executive Director of AFRICAphonie are all parts of this intellectual machine. Although he could amass easy lucre by simply praise-singing as most Cameroonian “intellectuals” have done, Mwalimu has remained consistent in voicing the peoples’ causes. His uncompromising stance for the people has had dire and sometimes heart-rending professional consequences. Yet, he remains undaunted and his active participation as spokesperson of the Committee for the Participation of Independent Candidates in the Electoral Process in Cameroon stands out as eloquent testimony. In the following interview, Mwalimu Ngwane elucidates on the *raison d’être* of the Committee, the stunted evolution of the democratisation process in Cameroon, democracy in Africa, the civil society and more. He was interviewed by Ajong Mbapndah.

Post Newsmagazine (PN): What prompted the idea of a committee to vouch for independent candidates and how will this change the democratic process in Cameroon?

Mwalimu George Ngwane (MGN): The committee for the participation of independent candidates is composed of forward-looking Cameroonian patriots who have over the years and at the expense of their political victimisation contributed to what I call the Cameroonian Renaissance. Members of the committee constitute a generation that symbolises a watershed between a waning political class and an emerging leadership; a leadership that sees Cameroon’s future in a new dispensation of democratic development, not the routine folklore of electoral democracy.

Our inspiration to formulate an independent candidature agenda is both internal and external. Internal because of the growing frustrations Cameroonians face in reconciling party sloganeering with social democracy; and also internal because of the lack of intra-party democracy that is blocking avenues of creative criticism and programmatic innovations; but more so external

because of the home-grown democratic models that are gaining currency in counties like Benin, Zimbabwe and Mali.

We are convinced that the unconditional participation of independent candidates at all electoral levels in Cameroon will refocus political choices on individual merit, will permit the youth, who are increasingly marginalised in party structures, to assert themselves; and will respond to Cameroon's constitutional provision which places national sovereignty on the people, not on the parties.

PN: So how has the memo you wrote to the President of the Republic on this independent candidacy been received so far?

MGN: So far our memorandum has not had a response from the President of the Republic, even if we have had verbal acknowledgement of receipt from certain Diplomatic services that were copied. We have also had encouragement from both party members and civil society actors in the country and abroad. I must confess that our committee underestimated the ground swell of opinion that has been in search of other options and alternatives in the face of the inadequacies of party systems. As spokesperson of the committee, I have had interactive radio programmes and e-mail correspondences. The common denominator is that independent candidacy is a political model worth its salt and this has been corroborated by the private bill just released by the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon in which it is clearly stated in Sections 63, 77 and 107 that independent candidates should participate in all elections in Cameroon without let or hindrance.

PN: If the government snubs your request, what other avenues do you intend to use?

MGN: Let me give you the experiences of other countries at least as an indication of the plethora of avenues available to the independent candidacy advocacy. Before 1961, the then Southern Cameroons/West Cameroon and République du Cameroun governments instituted independent candidacy as an electoral law thanks to the lone range voices of people like SE Ncha, Bau Okha, George Etame, AK Ndikum, Fon Angwafor III and Charles Assale. Then, between 1966 – 1983 other lone voices like A.T. Ngunjoh

and Abel Eyinga militated for this cause – this is what I call the civil society avenue.

In 1990, countries like Benin and Mali used the National Conference to institute independent candidates in the electoral laws – this is what I call the legislative avenue. In 1983 and 1992, President Paul Biya used his powers as Head of State to introduce independent candidacy only at the presidential elections, albeit with Herculean conditions, this is the executive avenue.

Lastly in Tanzania, in 1993, Reverend Christopher Mtikila filed a petition in the High Court at Dodoma, to seek for private candidates to participate in elections. The High court decided in his favour – this is the judiciary avenue. So there are at least four avenues we can use depending on the circumstances.

PN: Will the predominant Anglophone composition of the committee not put off Francophone Cameroonians?

MGN: When Yondo Black Mandengue, Anicet Ekane, Henriette Ekwe, Charles-Rene Djon Djon, Francis Kwa Moutome, Rodolphe Bwanga, Badje née Julienne Ngo Tang and Gabriel Hamani, all of Francophone stock with only two Anglophones, Vincent Feko and Albert Mukong, were arrested on February 12, 1990 for allegedly being in possession of incriminating documents that “undermined” the authority of the President of the Republic, the Cameroonian people did not see it as an exclusive Francophone-led liberation struggle.

When six Anglophone youths were shot in Bamenda after the 26 May 1990 launching of the SDF party by the Anglophone Ni Fru Ndi, genuine Cameroonians did not consider it as an Anglophone-led democratic struggle. Even when the All Anglophone Conference held in Buea in April 1993, Francophone Cameroonians saw it as a necessary knife to incise the All Cameroonian abscess. In other words, people-oriented democratic struggles neither have tribal nor linguistic colours; they have only one colour – the human colour. And this is shown by the interest both the Anglophone and Francophone press have manifested in the memo.

PN: *What in your opinion accounts for the lacklustre attitude of the civil society in Cameroon?*

MGN: We are victims of an imposed neo-liberal democracy that has divided most of Africa into two societies – the state society that is full of greed and the civil society that is boiling with grievance. While the state society reinforces its bonds of graft through smokescreen solidarity and prebendalism, the civil society weakens its stance through the pursuit of individualistic crumbs. But we must be careful because the recent solidarity by more than 700 pauperized labourers of the *Cameroon Tea Estate* who used their battered bodies as the last defence line of collective survival is testimony that the civil society might be docile but not dull; it might be organisationally weak but not institutionally weakened and it might be ideologically fragile but it is morally firm. Indeed, history has shown on many occasions that just when the civil society is portrayed as being rudderless, a bottom-up emancipatory movement emerges. It is therefore in the interest of state actors to consider the civil society as dormant political and social volcanoes.

PN: *What assessment can you make of democracy fifteen years after multiparty politics resurfaced in Cameroon?*

MGN: My assessment of 15 years of multiparty democracy in Cameroon is graphically detailed in an earlier treatise I wrote called “Cameroon’s democratic process – Vision 2020”; a treatise for which I suffered intellectual persecution and which has since 2004 earned me an elastic suspension of my duties as Delegate for Culture for the South West Province, just three months after my appointment.

Yet I stand by that constructive treatise and will add that while the one party system emasculated us politically, it saved us economically. In the one party system there was discipline without democracy, but today there is democracy without discipline. We need to review our vision of party politics because the gains of national development in the one party system have today been sacrificed on the altar of futile electoral exercises and sterile political pontifications.

Political parties that were supposed to articulate the social interest of the masses and to provide concrete human and structural development solutions have instead become conduits of immunity

for the pornographic personalization of power, the primitive accumulation of wealth and the predatory criminalisation of the state. The two recent Congresses held by the SDF and the CPDM (the main parties in Cameroon) still show how far Cameroonians will have to journey with the party politics of personality cult instead of Nationalistic vision.

A *vox pop* conducted by a local tabloid in the month of July revealed that Cameroonians are losing trust in our political system. The respondents feared Cameroon would be doomed until a trustworthy alternative to power emerges. And this seems to be a world trend because a recent UN Report also reveals that less than 20 percent of Latin Americans have confidence in political parties and only one in three is satisfied with democracy in their countries.

PN: *How do you see the future of democracy in Cameroon?*

MGN: There is no doubt that we have made strides in democracy as a concept but we have a problem managing, consolidating and sustaining it. Politicians must recognise that what happens to citizens between elections is as important as what happens during elections; indeed, sometimes it is not elections that fail, it is governments that do. We must eliminate this monolithic mentality that sees criticism as subversion and that equates fanaticism with patriotism.

Cameroon has a very bright future simply because the Almighty God is in total control. But we must not allow God to lose his patience. All of us need to make democracy a social contract, an economic glue that binds us. The search for democratic structures like the Independent Election Commission and private candidacy should go beyond the multiplication of elections and the multiplicity of election candidates, for our democracy can only make meaning if it impacts on the quality of life of the Cameroonian people.

As I see it, the 2007 municipal and legislative elections and subsequently senatorial elections should provide us with an opportunity to make informed political choices not on tribal sentiments or sheepish party lines, but on the intrinsic values and philosophies of the candidates, private or party.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

There is a loss of faith in the Party System in Cameroon

Interviewed by Nforngwa Ndiboti Eugene (The Herald)

Why is it important for Independents to run for elections?

The participation of Independent candidates in every election translates into political reality the repossession of popular sovereignty and democratic legitimacy by all the citizens. Party formation is founded on the will of a section of the people prepared ostensibly to articulate the people's interest by electoral then representative democracy. But above all, democracy is rooted in the concept of choices and options. Independent candidacy is one of those options that expands democratic space, that focuses on individual merit, that addresses issues specific to the electorate and that provides an opportunity for the young men and women to actively participate in politics.

In the case of Cameroon, our democratic march is being stalled because of voter disenfranchisement and electoral abstention and part of the reasons is the gradual loss of faith in party systems especially among young people. Indeed, how many young people between the ages of 21 and 35 are registered in political parties?

Independent candidacy therefore provides an alternative framework of representation needed to revitalize the democratic development both as a model and a socio-economic contract between the electorate and the elected in Cameroon.

What prompted the initiative to lobby for easing participation of Independents in elections?

The Committee for the participation of Independent candidates that took the initiative to lobby for participation of Independents is composed of patriotic Cameroonians who for the last 15 years have, sometimes at their peril, contributed to the democratic debate in Cameroon. We did not fight to throw off the yoke of one-party tyranny only to embrace the folklore of multiparty anarchy. Anyone with a keen political eye, must have observed that short of returning to a monolithic system, we are on the brink of a dominant rainbow coalition of parties scenario with its attendant manifestations of opulent prebendalism by a few and a conspicuous

pauperization of a greater number. Yet Cameroon is not in short supply of a human capital with a vision that can jumpstart a veritable Cameroonian Renaissance. What these human resources are asking for is to be liberated from the monopoly of party politics and to be put on the same pedestal with party loyalists so together they can take our country from its New Deal to a new frontier.

How does the electoral code in current use make the participation of individual candidates difficult?

The present electoral code does not permit Independent candidates to run for municipal and legislative elections and when you know that local governance is intimately linked with candidate profile then you would understand how unfortunate it is to favour public officers who rather owe their loyalty to party hierarchy rather than their constituencies. As for independent candidates acceding to the Presidency, it was unheard of before 1983. It was thanks to the spirited and solitary fight of Anthony Ngunjoh and Abel Eyinga that it became a subject of debate later on. All of this is recorded in a new authoritative book called “Men of Courage” authored by Churchill Monono. President Paul Biya takes the credit for permitting Independents to run for Presidency (Decree of 1st December 1983) with the proviso that such a candidate must have stayed in the country for 5 years and must produce 500 legalised signatures from members of Parliament, consular chambers, councilors and first class chiefs. Through law no.92/010 of 7 September 1992, President Biya reduced the legalized signature condition to 300. The truth is that no Independent has succeeded to fulfill this draconian condition since 1997.

What reforms are needed to make it easier for Independents?

We are all aware that a team of Commonwealth Experts, including an Expert from Francophone Africa is working with a Ministerial committee to examine the modalities for establishing an Independent Electoral Managing body in Cameroon. This implies that the electoral code needs to be modified as well and anyone interested in an Independent electoral commission cannot be indifferent to independent candidacy.

A modified electoral code should allow for independent candidates to vie for municipal and legislative elections and the 300-

signature condition for Presidency be dropped. On the other hand, conditions like length of stay in the country, campaign funding, financial deposits etc should be instituted so that the Independent candidacy option does not become another political adventure. I prefer to leave such details to constitutional experts since our committee is more preoccupied now with the participation of Independent candidate principle.

You want independents as early as 2007 (municipal and parliamentary elections). Why the urgency?

In most of my writings, I have argued that democracy is not just about setting up parties or organizing elections. It is more about improving the life of the people. Democracy is a means to a goal. To be fanatical about party entitlement without assessing its impact on one's life is to live a life of democratic illusion. Once the institutions or structures of democracy have been put in place, it behoves upon the leadership to start focusing on the dividends of democracy. No one can deny that by our country's historical perspective we have made more strides in our democratic renewal than say 20 years ago, but in the context of African democratic peer review monitoring we need a fast multi-track democratic engagement.

Here we are, still talking of an Independent electoral commission when countries like Benin, Mali, Tanzania, Cote d'Ivoire etc have had it since 1990. We are still talking of Independent candidates in 2007 when Swaziland's senate in 1993 produced 30 independents, Rwandese local government election of 2000 was candidate-based and the Malian and Beninese people decided in 2002 and 2006 respectively to vote Independent candidates as Presidents of their countries. What democratic ingredients do these fellow African countries have that has made them to see the urgency of installing indigenous and people-centered democratic structures which in comparison drowns our 2007 Independency candidacy clarion call into a belated déjà-vu?

You could have had amendments through initiating a private members bill. Why did you choose to write a Memo to the president, instead?

We are exploring all formal avenues of advocacy that should lead to legislation. The private member bill option has not been left out.

But we are realistic to the fact that President Biya has been the prime mover of the independent candidacy file as I mentioned to you earlier. As a civil society group that we are, we also know that any true democracy is founded on the constructive engagement between all the arms of power.

The civil society is the fourth estate of the realm and it should be able to have the ears of the executive judiciary and legislature. I hope the other arms of power as well as concerned Cameroonians and development partners will now seize this avenue to market the Independent candidate project, which we have launched.

Other remarks?

Our committee is happy to note that Sections 63, 77 and 107 of the electoral code just released by the National Episcopal Conference makes mention of the participation of Independent candidates at all levels of our elections unconditionally. We also note with relief that the bill on the election of Senators and Regional Councilors recently tabled to the present session of parliament recognizes the fact that a percentage of the members shall be drawn from the civil society as Independents. Lest we forget, the Tripartite of 1991 was a meeting of government, parties and Independents. What this all sums to is that the principle of independent candidacy in Cameroon has an official stamp of democratic legitimacy. What is of relevance now is its humane and practical constitutional or electoral legality.

Chapter Thirty

The United States of Africa is a Matter of Urgency

Originally published in Panafrikan Visions magazine

The idea of a United States of Africa has been floating around for over fifty years today. When the great visionary Kwame Nkrumah militated so strongly for it, some of his peers rated him over ambitious with an unbridled appetite to exert control on the entire continent. That the idea is still a subject of strong debate today is a sign that Nkrumah was just a man out of the ordinary with a vision far above the comprehension of many in his generation and even subsequent ones. The last African Union Summit in Accra Ghana ignited the debate in full force although to many the outcome fell short of expectations.

In the interview below, frontline Pan Africanist and, Executive Director of AFRICAphonic Mwalimu George Ngwane says the United States of Africa is a matter of urgency. The last African Union Summit, leadership in Africa, and a lot more are addressed by Mwalimu Ngwane, one of the most ardent disciples of Nkrumah in this interview he had with Ajong Mbapndah L for Pan African Visions.

Pan African Visions (PAV): The African Union Summit in Ghana emerged with camps dubbed gradualists and radicalists. Did the debate on continental unity make any progress?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Yes it did, first the debate on the United States of Africa had never featured on the agenda of the continental organization since it was defended by Nkrumah at the OAU summit in 1965. Second the attendance by Heads of State and Governments recorded an all time high since the African Union was created and lastly the consensus towards the ultimate creation of a United States of Africa was much larger than it was the case during the O.A.U. So even though there was an unnecessary polarization between the gradualists and the fast track proponents, there was a desire to stamp this continent with the identity of a common citizenship. What I think was lacking in the African Union summit was a clear picture of what the United States of Africa is or will be.

PAV: Do you think the views expressed by the leaders are in accordance with those of the people, we have so far heard little about opportunities given to the African people, especially the masses to get their say.

Mwalimu Ngwane: Since there was no referendum conducted in individual countries or national parliaments consulted, one can only conjecture that the views expressed by the various Heads of states were either their personal convictions or their countries' official diplomatic stance. And this is where the controversy arises.

The United States of Africa project is first and foremost about establishing a common geographical, economic and political space for the African people. In this vein the debate on Union Government carried a lot of position posturing to the detriment of the very essence of a united people's bottom-up approach. If any referendum is conducted today among the African people about the United Africa, I can bet you that it will be a 99.99 percent for the immediate establishment.

Before the July summit, our Organisation, AFRICAphonic conducted a Referendum among University students and there was an overwhelming YES for the immediate creation of the United States of Africa. The truth is that this group of gradualists has graduated into skeptics since the very leaders who are supposed to use regional economic communities as building blocks are themselves stumbling blocks. We have buried our heads for too long in the gradualist sand that we fail to assess how underdeveloped Africa remains far behind other regional groups in the world. It is time the various country parliaments, civil society associations, the pan African parliament are given opportunities to lend a voice to the ordinary masses.

PAV: What in concrete terms do you think the people stand to benefit with the advent of? A continental government?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Africa remains the most vulnerable continent because it lacks a concerted diplomacy through a strong united political voice. This has been grossly exploited by the International community. Our continent still believes in a hand-out instead of a hands-on approach and so lacks both the ownership and control of its huge human and natural resources. The result is that we keep adjusting our political and economic models according to the

dictates of Eurocentric desiderata. Indeed even though the world talks of a global village; Africa in its present dispersed ranks is a victim of global pillage.

Because of a lack of endogenous or Africentric developmental paradigm, we have become strangled by the draconian and inhuman economic policies imposed on a divided Africa by the unholy trinity of IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation. A united Africa will therefore provide a common market based on intra-African trade, it will provide a common identity that will erase the prospects of conflicts, it will provide a common citizenship hinged on the free movement of people and like I mentioned before it will provide a strong political bargaining power necessary to reclaim our authority as a free and independent people.

PAV: Some five years since the African Union was formed has it in your view lived up to expectations and what difference do you see between it and the OAU.

Mwalimu Ngwane: I wish to inform you that just as the OAU was born out of two schools of thought so was the African Union. Let me explain. What came out as the OAU charter was more of a concession made by the Casablanca group towards the Monrovia bloc. What also came out as the African Union Treaty was more of a concession made by the Sirte group towards the Durban bloc. The Sirte group of 1999 led by Gaddafi militated in favour of rapid acceleration of the African Economic Community, powers were supposed to reside in what was called the African Congress etc but all of these were watered down by the Durban bloc of 2002 led by Thabo Mbeki and Obasanjo. The result was that the African Union became radical in intention but moderate in action.

However the structures like Peace and Security Council, pan African parliament, Court of Justice etc within the African Union are benchmarks that make the AU different from its predecessor. The bone of contention still remains the power base of the AU Chairman vis-a-vis Heads of States and the functional workability of these structures towards the goals they have set for themselves. Be it as it may, the OAU continues to serve as the carcass that will manure the growth of the AU and the United States of Africa.

PAV: Kwame Nkrumah harped on the need for a United Africa before talks about the Europe Union and its predecessor the European Economic Commission, what in your opinion is holding Africa back from something many think will be of great benefit to all?

Mwalimu Ngwane: One may be in a rush to accuse our leaders of being egocentric, of holding tenaciously to their banana republics and coconut empires, of serving Western interest more than African interest, of failing to rise up to the aspirations of their citizens which citizens may also be accused of suffering from a pathological spirit of docility and impotence. But to me the larger problem lies on the lack of a clear architecture called Union Government or United States of Africa. By Union Government do we mean a continental federation that will see one Head of State for the continent with the present heads of states assuming the roles of Governors with a rotatory proviso? Do we mean a continental confederation with regions being coordinated by a supra-national central organ? Will that supra-national central organ be the African Union with more powers given to the African Union Chairperson who should now become the continent's spokesperson with Commissioners that will be appointed by and responsible to him than to their respective countries? Or would it be a reinforcement of the functional cooperation model especially in the areas of foreign policy, defence, infrastructure, trade and commerce and with the pan African parliament enjoying full legislative powers and a pan African media organ created?

Both the civil society and state actors need to ponder over this seriously before the January AU summit in Addis Ababa come 2008 .Let us get the political arm of United States of Africa clear before the end of 2007 so that both the economic and cultural unions should align with the political union in 2008. This may probably jumpstart the United States of Africa edifice.

PAV: With crises in Ivory Coast, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Darfur etc are you satisfied with the response of the present generation of leaderships in the continent?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Africa is a continent that spends so many resources in peace initiatives unlike other countries that vote heavy budgets to fund conflicts and wars. It is certain that we shall not have a conflict-proof continent even in the birth of a United States

of Africa but no one can deny that there have been fewer frequencies in conflicts than they were when we just had Independence. Most of the wars today arise from dismal governance, constitutional tinkering, election masquerade, poor resource allocation and the perpetration of a minority of rent-seeking political class lording it over the majority of emasculated masses. The realistic response to these conflicts should rather be eradicating the conditions that create them than the fire-fighting pranks that mellow them.

PAV: Mwalimu, As a seasoned Pan Africanist, what do you make first of the judicial proceedings in France against Presidents Sassou Nguesso of Congo and Omar Bongo of Gabon on questionable sources of their investments and on the other hand the recent public declaration of his assets by current Nigerian leader Yar'Adua?

Mwalimu Ngwane: How do you feel when you hear that Abacha's billions are stashed in foreign banks? How do you react to the fact that Mobutu's assets are all out of his country? How do you wink knowing that the assets of some of our present leaders are ten times more than their countries' budgets? If that is not economic genocide; if that is not a crime against humanity then tell me what it is? So who will raise any objection against judicial proceedings meted out to African leaders? My only regret is that these proceedings are carried out in foreign countries whose leaders are also in collusion with this economic carnage. And that is why I support the move for our guilty leaders to be tried in own gacacas. As for the current Nigerian leader's public declaration of his assets, it is a step in the right direction especially as he needs the support of his country people to erase the election blemish that brought him to power.

PAV: What prospects do you see in relations between Africa and Europe with the emergence of Nicholas Sarkozy and Gordon Brown as leaders in France and Britain respectively?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Africa's destiny should not be conditioned on the leadership change in Europe or America. Infact we should stop looking at the political gimmicks and diplomatic tokenisms that characterize Europe-Africa relations. The relations have been one of patronage not partnership and one of condescending sympathy

not fraternal solidarity. This is normal. The British, French and Americans did not elect their Presidents to take care of African interest but we elect our own leaders only for them to turn their backs on us.

This is not to suggest an isolated Africa. I advocate a renegotiated deal based on Africa speaking to China, Africa speaking to Asia, Africa speaking to the Europe, Africa speaking to America, etc. And this will not happen until Africa is united, it will not happen as long as our leaders continue looking eastward and westward for development, it will not happen with the present democratic dispensation in Africa that focuses on routine and manipulated electoral democracy instead of the dividends of social democracy.

PAV: At the threshold of the first decade of the new millennium what does Africa need to do to catch up with the rest of the world in terms of development?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Africa knows what it needs to do; the problem is the lack of political courage by its leaders. It was the Cameroonian President Paul Biya who asked the rhetorical question of why countries like Malaysia, Singapore and other South Asian countries which were behind most African countries have suddenly made giant strides in economic development. Like Nkrumah once declared the fault is in us not in our stars.

While other countries possess leaders with vision and conviction, our African soil is replete with leaders whose future is behind them and who refuse to pass the buck constitutionally. The answer is for young people to start organizing themselves like the Nkrumahs, Nyereres, and Keitas did in their days. The youths must collectively dream their own dreams and chart their own agendas for their countries and this continent. Rather than retreating into their ethnic shells or venturing into migratory blues, young people should connect across the artificial and psychological barriers created by the Berlin conference. They should engage their political party leaders and independent candidates into a pan African vision in tandem with a national development trajectory.

I look forward to an All African Peoples' Congress that will bring together young pan Africanists within the civil society; journalists, socio-professional bodies, students, farmers, business persons, trade unionists, economic operators in the Diaspora. For

indeed, Africa is in dire need of contemporary patriots who are inspired by the faith of yesterday's martyrs.

PAV: Any comments on the idea of countries which are ready coming together to start the United States of Africa as mooted by the Senegalese?

Mwalimu Ngwane: Abdoulaye Wade's option which is one of voluntary instead of holistic integration should be taken seriously especially against the historical background that gradualists have always hijacked the debate on a United Africa, History also informs us that in 1961, three countries, Ghana, Mali and Guinea began a Union of African States with the desire to form the nucleus of a United States of Africa. Let us not forget that those countries which postulated for an immediate United Africa during the Accra July summit are drawn from four important geographical sub regions of Africa. This means that once other citizens see the benefits accruing from this transnational integration they shall stampede their leadership into opting in. Again did the present European Union not begin by a mere wedding of economic interest of coal and steel between France and Germany?

I really hope we can all see the need to be more involved in a continental fast track integration process rather than an optional piecemeal approach. For as far as I am concerned Africa's Revolution has begun and no one can stop it now. The United States of Africa is not a matter of time; it is a matter of urgency.

Chapter Thirty-One

The Causes of Conflicts in Africa

The African Union Summit of 1-2 July has just ended in the Gambia. In this exclusive interview with our Buea Correspondent Solomon Amabo, the Pan Africanist, Mwalimu George Ngwane revisits the summit. He says that there are many economic programmes which adversely affect the development of Africa and that African Heads of state who do not often attend the summits often find their proposals on how to build Africa not taken seriously. Read on.

EDEN: The Seventh Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit has just ended in the Gambia. As a keen observer of African Affairs, could you refresh us on the highlights of this summit?

Mwalimu Ngwane: The theme of the summit was rationalization and harmonization of Regional Economic communities and regional integration in Africa. Before the summit and in the margins, the judges of the African court of Human and People Rights in the Gambia were expected to be sworn in. there were private sector meetings, and an African Union Awards ceremony. But the main topic of the summit which was, like I mentioned earlier, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Integration. I must say I was highly disappointed that up till now the African Union is still talking about Regional Integration when a road map had been put in place towards the harmonization of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Integration. That roadmap had envisaged within six stages and before the year 2025, the elimination, among member states of each regional economic Community, of customs duties, quota restrictions, administrative trade barriers and all other non-tariff barriers; indeed all prohibitions that prevent the free movement of persons and capital. At the end of which, Africa was to establish an Economic Community or common marke that shall be charged with coordinating the activities of Regional Economic Community. That economic roadmap died in 2001 when NEPAD was born.

Are you accusing NEPAD for having killed the African Economic Community roadmap?

What I am saying is that NEPAD derailed and brought the African Economic Community (AEC) roadmap to a halt as was decided by the African Heads of States in the 1999 Summit in Libya. After the summit, instead of accelerating the AEC roadmap of 1991, Obasanjo, Mbeki, Wade, and Bouteflika came up with NEPAD. The whole idea of the AEC was not to change names but accelerate the process. Too many programs were in place and they relied on NEPAD because Mbeki argued that technicians who were not Heads of States drew the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 and the 1991 AEC. They therefore wanted to draw their own programmes. That was where there were conflicts and NEPAD was given a free rise.

Looking at NEPAD as an organization working for the development of Africa, especially the rural areas; at what level was there conflict with the other development programmes?

First there is the problem of ideology. Was the AEC programme not working or not popular? It is not true. It is a problem of personality ego. Also we find a procedural problem. As a background, Mbeki's programme was called the millennium African Renaissance Programme and Wade came up with the Omega Plan. The two were merged to create NEPAD. In fact every leader wanted to give the impression that he too can conceive an economic programme instead of accelerating the AEC. The NEPAD had the institutional problem since it seemed to have been conceived as a parallel programme to the AU. But the AEC was under AU. The fourth problem is who owns NEPAD? With the above conflicts, NEPAD for me remains an intellectual exercise in the minds of its founding fathers while political parties have their focus on elections. The common man who was to benefit from AEC was the sacrificial lamb in all this.

Some people are beginning to think that the AU may go the same way as the O.A.U. what is your take on that?

That current of thought is not only coming from the people. The chairman of the African Union Commission, Alpha Omar Konare, expressed some frustrations during the Summit, pointing, especially

to the slow implementation pace of projects by member states and the colossal misappropriation of funds within the commission Konare mentioned the embezzlement of funds by his staff during the conference of intellectuals and Africans living in the Diaspora that held in Senegal in October 2004. Even though I sympathize with the chairman, I must confess that the structure to blow such a whistle are either the court of Auditors (absent in the AU) or the pan-Africa parliament (having only an advisory role). The first three years of African Union brought a lot of hope but this routine summit seems to be more about attendance than achievements. This was the same ill that made the OAU irrelevant as a people oriented organization.

How then can African Union transform itself into a people oriented organization?

First, the African union should return to the September 1999 sirte dream, which was a revolutionary dialectic, propagated by Muammar Gadaffi. That sirte dream was itself a Nkrumahist pan-Africanism, a Casablanca renaissance that militated for the United States of Africa. What is African unity, if it were not about African citizenship? And the push factors to a common continental citizenship are enshrined in the abolition of all barriers (visa, language, transport communication obstacles etc) that impede the movement of persons, right of residence and establishment. Secondly, the African union does not need biannual summits, now that it is equipped with organs and specialized technical committees. In my opinion, African union summit should be held once three years leaving the organs to be more functional and the AU assembly to serve as a co-coordinating unit of implementation. Then the summit should remain in Addis Ababa, then the concept of president acting as chair persons (in the case where they are hosting the summit) should be abolished and the AU chairman play a more executive role reminiscent of the Diallo Telli era.

Buoba Diallo Telli, Guinean, the first secretary general of the OAU, came up a principle that as SG, he is the president of presidents. He wanted a free hand to control the OAU to a point where decisions should be taken even above heads of states. He wanted the OAU to be a supra-National Organ. Unfortunately, he went into trouble with the West Saharan Affair because he said the

West Saharan should be taken as a country in Africa. But it was his prerogative to take such decisions for the continent after consultations with all member states. When Diallo left the OAU, there was Nzo Ekeagali, then Eteki Mbuoma and so on. They became minute's scribes and not executive secretaries. This is the problem of the AU. Even when the name changed from SG of OAU to the chairman of the AU, the powers have not been given to them.

What account for the numerous conflicts in Africa even after the creation of the peace and security organ in the African union?

First, there does not seem to be a clear role for the peace and security organ in the African Union, as it is the case of the Security Council in the United Nations. I also think there is less complementarity between the adhoc peace committees and the peace organ needs to be more militant at the level of preventive diplomacy as recommended by the resolutions of the OAU summit of 1993 in Cairo. Be it as it may, most conflicts in Africa are intra-state which means the perennial problems of bad governance, lack of endogenous economic programmes, unequal distribution of resources, economic graft and political greed have not melted away within some of our states. To compound this bad situation, Africa's reliance on the Bretton Woods prescriptions instead of intra African trade, the connivance of Multinational Corporation and some Western governments to advance their own agendas have denied Africa the opportunity of political stability and economic development. But let this beak forest not hide the trees of progress witnessed in Botswana, Tanzania, Mauritania, Ghana, Benin, Libya, and Mali, just to name this few. At the end of the day the ownership of conflict-proof Africa lies on the kind of partnership that exists between the leaders and their citizens.

Among the issues the AU is trying to handle is the southern Cameroon's national Council case. We did not hear anything about it. Observers even said this case is what makes president Biya avoid attending these summits. At what level is this case?

As far as I know, the case is in the specialized court in Banjul, the Gambia. Though not so conversant with the dynamics of the case, I know I know the merit stage. To the best of my knowledge it has

not been brought to the AU General Assembly. This again is another problem with the AU which is interested in areas where war has already erupted. This contradicts Salim Ahmed Salim's spirit of 1993, which focused on conflicts prevention than resolution. He wanted OAU to look at where there were emerging conflicts and be able to stop them before they escalate. It is unfortunate. I think the AU through peace and Security Council should be able to have a database of countries that are already having some potential of conflict and treat them. That includes the SCNC of the course.

It has been observed that some African heads of states do not often or never attend AU summits. Dose their action have any impact on their country within the AU in anyway?

It is very wrong for any of them not to personally attend some of these African summits. It is clear that when there is a meeting that concerns you, you ought to be present. The case of Cameroon is even more serious, where, for a long time, the president has not personally attended these summits. Nonetheless there is no clause that binds them to attend. The most important clause is for them to meet up to their membership. But of course when it comes to deliberation of issues once a country dose not have a high executive presence, it might militate against any of it projects been taken very seriously. So when heads of states don't attend, it ha san impact on their country.

You recently came up some memo on the need independent candidates for all elections in Cameroon. Did that view have the whole continent at heart?

Well, it is a kind of democracy that is rooted on the African soil because African democracy talks of candidates and not party profile and programmes. That is, the focus should be on individual merits of the candidate. The perception of this committee for which I am spokesperson believes that Cameroon's democracy that has remain at the level of party politics has showed limitations. The way to enhance competition and expand the democratic space is to give a chance to stand with party candidates on the same level playing field. Our bone of contention is that at every level of every election the independent candidate be allowed to stand. We believe that

municipal and legislatures are grass root elections and the people need to know who is representing them.

Not people who are hiding their deficiencies under party canopy. The second thing is that at the presidential elections, we find that people need to go for 300 signatures though some parties do not have up to 300 members. You can not put a person with a new ideology with partisan people. We want that clause of 300 signatures to be nullified. Democracy is about options and choices and we can not remain in the same monolithic mentalities in the 1990s. These are structures which have succeeded in Mali and Benin. We don't know the party for which Weah and Ellen Johnson belonged. We only know of their names. I think it is time to adopt a fast multi-track democratic system. The independent electoral commission and candidates that Cameroon is still dragging its feet on, has already been adopted in other countries, fifteen years ago. we therefore give the task to the Cameroonian leadership and the people of Cameroon who own national sovereignty to understand the need for these independent democratic institutions.

The just ended African summit, equally had on its agenda the crisis in the Dafur and Ivory Coast. Is there any hope that there would be peace in those areas after this summit?

One good thing about conflict is that they never disappear and are the dynamics of society. Even where Jesus was born are conflicts. The most important thing about conflicts is how they are managed. When the AU came up in article 5, pointing out the peace and Security Council, I thought this organ would be responsible for preventing conflict from becoming wars. The problem in Africa is that conflicts turned to be armed conflicts. The peace and Security Council has not been given a definite role, given that there are conflicts between what it has to do and what the security council of the AU does. Secondly, the AU has the habit of creating ad hoc committees in charge of peace mediation in conflicts with the African peace and Security Council and even the UN. These committees have coherent manners of handling conflicts. Dafur suffers from historical/colonial overhang. Sudan was made up of people with religious backgrounds. This can be managed. In Ivory Coast there is internal wrangling with the key players and the influence of Western powers, such as France. So I think if the AU

disarmament, there would be peace. The French and their puppet leader, Guillaume Soro, should also be called to order because there are already reports that elections may not hold there come 30 October 2006.

Do you still remain an optimistic pan-africanist?

I have no other choice because Africa is the only continent I call my own; but Pan-africanism should not just be an emotional response, it should be an intellectual contribution to the contrasts and contradictions in Africa, where one sees an opulent lifestyle of the elite, contrasting with the pauperized reality of the masses, where one sees the yawning gap between the abundance of natural resources and the paucity of economic development, where one sees the increase in tendency for leaders who have outlived their democratic usefulness still clinging to power. No! the people of Africa have been humiliated enough in slavery and colonialism, the African Youth are now looking for vistas of freedom through gruesome immigration ventures, and the leaders of Africa have refused to transform our orange revolution into the green revolution. Yet I still see an emerging leadership that shall produce a vaccine to stop the virus of economic dependency and political folklore because there is nothing so wrong with Africa that can not be made right by Africans.

“Without doubt, George Ngwane’s best is yet to come in spite of the Herculean obstacles on his way, and this collection is just a small window into what he has to offer. Sit back and drink deep from the Mwalimu’s fountain of knowledge that never runs dry!”

— **Dibussi Tande**

The book examines the creative industries of Cameroon and Africa and makes bold the cultural triumphant assertion that Africa is home to some of the most diverse cultural patrimony and the most versatile creative professionals. It also discusses indigenous development models and questions the rationale for Eurocentric democratic paradigms which have partly contributed to the demise of a concrete democratic development entitlement in most African countries. Ngwane weaves both the cultural and political strands into a search for a homegrown development web which he calls ‘glocalisation’.

Ngwane’s essays, most of which have animated debate and discourse in national newspapers, online blogs and International journals are lucid in their arguments, poignant in their ideological focus, rich in their non-fiction craftsmanship and urgent in their message delivery. The essays will make good reading for students of Africa studies, Development studies, Politics and Culture.

Mwalimu George Ngwane is author of seven books and feature essayist in national and international newspapers, Chairman of the National Book Development Council- Cameroon, Member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the African Book Publishing Record- Columbia, U.S.A. Recipient, Scholar at Risk Fund Fellowship in 2004 (U.S.A), Executive Director of the pan African Association AFRICaphonie (www.Africaphonie.org). His personal blog is www.gngwane.com. He lives in Cameroon.



Langaa Research and Publishing
Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Province
Cameroon

Cover: Abidemi Olowonira

